WHAT IS LUTHERANISM?

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WHAT IS LUTHERANISM?

A Symposium in Interpretation

EDITED BY

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FOREWORD

LIKE every other generation, ours has its own peculiar challenges and problems. It is the part of wisdom not only to recognize and understand the drift of those changing thought-currents, which so subtly motivate men and shape events, but to know how to share and help direct them to the best advantage for our day and for the future. Each succeeding generation, after all, is the complex of three, the one which is slowly passing, the one which holds the stage, and the one which is being born. As such, it is a crossroad where the old mingles with the new, where the past interlocks quietly or noisily with the present, where the conservatisms of heritage clash with the liberalisms involved in fresh discovery.

For some generations the task of adjustment is easy, because the transitions are hardly perceptible. For our day the task is extremely difficult, because the changes have become cataclysmic. A flood of new knowledge and insights has swept from over the horizon; startling discoveries of men bent over painstaking research and in the use of perfected instruments of measurement and calculation have brought into disrepute many older judgments; the collection and synthesis of known data in terms of principles and laws have overthrown many naïve notions of the world and its interpretation; new methods of technique have opened up hitherto unsuspected problems which cry out for solution and evaluation; quickened avenues of social intercourse have brought men together in closer companionship, increasing by leaps and bounds the sense of comradeship in a world growing steadily smaller. There is hardly a single field of human interest that has not seen radical changes under the magic

spell of scientific inquiry and searching criticism: political, social, economic practices and custom; art in all its varied expressions; theoretical and applied sciences such as medicine, physics, chemistry, biology, geology, psychology (named at random); philosophy and even religion. All of our inheritances have been rudely shaken by the challenges of a suddenly shifting order and have left us with no disguised feelings of restlessness and uncertainty.

It can hardly be expected that our traditional religious faith and our theological affirmations will be exempt from the influences of the surging challenges of contemporary thought. For a considerable time, inroads have been made within the historic and sacred folds, and without, until to-day the momentum has assumed the character of the revolutionary and the critical. Catholicism has already given a plain answer to its Tyrells and Loisys. Protestantism has found itself divided into new rifts and alignments, ranging from the extreme left of an uncompromising traditionalism to the extreme right of an arrogant independence. And, in the search for an adequate understanding and orientation in the counterchallenges of the new and the old, groups and schools are once more looking within themselves and back upon the source from which they spring, reëvaluating and reinterpreting, and seeking that perspective which is so necessary in effecting adjustment and asserting leadership.

Lutheranism, strangely enough, had its birth in an age notoriously analogous to that of ours, one replete with cataclysmic changes. Starting as a protesting revolt against certain alleged abuses within a great historic Church, it soon found itself unwittingly the epitome of seething and fermenting currents which seemed to await the signal to burst the shell of an almost overwhelming tradition and which touched the whole range of human interests, religious, social, political, cultural. Removed brusquely from old moorings and tossed out upon a world charged with the quixotic power of suddenly released energies, the movement found itself con-

fronted with the necessity of going beyond its initial Protestant stage to that of constructing a program of its own. In the aftermath of a hectic day, when libertanism and iconoclasm struggled with traditionalism, when a conservative Protestantism sought to defend itself against the attacks of both, when new varieties of Protestantism arose to protest against the older forms and against each other, Lutheranism emerged with lines distinctly marked out and fences built guardedly about. Like so many other great movements in history, it achieved a status of its own; it came to recognize something *sui generis* about its character and purpose.

After four centuries, during which it has played an important part in the promulgation of a Protestant Christianity, Lutheranism appears before the world with the largest number of adherents of that great group (some seventy-five million), and one of the three or four leading Protestant bodies in America. Interpreters of that phenomenal development will see in it elements which will range all the way from the accidental to the providential. Homogeneous as it appears to the outside observer, nevertheless its inner life reveals strains of conflicting views as to its essential character. This is evident from a study of its history, but more so to those who see it amidst the stress and strain of contemporary time. It can hardly be expected that this group will escape the many serious challenges of modern thought; in fact, evidences are not wanting both in Europe and America that there is an awakened interest among its devotees and admirers to look back upon its course from the perspective of a new and perplexed era with the view to appraise its essential character, its unique meaning and purpose, its relation to certain relevant problems, and its possible contribution to the twentieth century and to the future of Christianity. To effect an adequate contact and a wholesome contribution to the religious life of our generation, it is necessary for Lutheranism to orientate itself, not only with the exigencies of the present

order, but to an appreciative understanding of its very *raison d'être.*

Lutheranism in America has for decades sought to function institutionally in the form of a distracted and a divided church. Group has been pitted over against group in a most vigorous internecine and unhappy struggle, each somehow claiming for itself the unique right to the title Lutheran and quite unwilling to share equal honors with others. Many factors, of course, have played into these divisions, political, national, linguistic and cultural, social, psychological and theological, the reaches of which stretch back into the secrets of European history. That the children of the fathers are quite unwilling to maintain the old order of separatism is evident in the current movement toward sympathetic fellowship and organic union, in the direction of which this generation is making significant history. Many old fences have been torn down and, happily, many more are falling into disrepair. However bitter were the misunderstandings and the quarrels of their fathers, the children are finding themselves congenial neighbors.

Lutheranism in America, moreover, has for decades sought to function theologically in the form of a more or less conservative traditionalism. Certain factors, of course, have played into this emphasis which, too, have strands that reach back into the secrets of an earlier European thought. Not all groups, however, have been equally loyal to this tradition; some have been ultra conservative, others conservative, still others mildly so—shades often too imperceptible to be noticed except by the initiated, and yet, "shades." That there are to-day unmistakable voices calling out for theological reinterpretations, especially by the younger men schooled in the ways of modern thought, is most evident to anyone who has his ears to the ground. What fences will here need mending will also be answered in due time by the children.

This book is written as a tacit acknowledgment of the peculiar challenges of our day. It is, however, not a study of

those challenges in themselves. The press already has poured forth a flood of books dealing with modern religious problems and, of course, these are not matters hidden away. Nor is it an historical study of either the source or course of Lutheran history as such; this phase has already received careful attention in the published works of scholars engaged in historical research. Nor is it an apologetic.

It is, rather, *a study in interpretation* of the unique character of Lutheranism as one of the great movements in Protestant Christianity, with special reference to some of the particular problems raised in the drift of contemporary thought.

The men who have met together in this Symposium come from rather widely scattered sections of the Lutheran Church in America. The biographical data which appear with each contribution will attest to the high regard in which they are held by their several official connections and give ample evidence to their wide acquaintance with the church of their heritage. All of them are keenly sensitive to the peculiar problems of to-day. That each should find in Lutheranism an interpretation at variance with the one side-by-side is no more curious than the spectacle which confronts us in Holy Writ of a Mark, a Luke, a Matthew, a John, a Paul, who sees something unique in the phenomena he is interpreting and is quite at variance with the one next. Interpreters, whoever they may be, reflect the colorings of their own experiences and outlook. It need not be stated that none of the writers of these essays lay any claim to infallibility.

In general, we have asked each contributor to discuss, in the light of the perspective presented above, the following questions: What is Lutheranism? What is its essential character? In the light of its unique character what is its unique contribution to modern Christianity or to Protestantism? What is the relation of Lutheranism to the historic confessions, especially to its own confessions and symbols? How far are these normative? Are the declarations set down in the

post-Luther period an essential part of Lutheranism? Is its theology fixed? What is the attitude of essential Lutheranism to such problems as: Modern biblical scholarship with the implications involved in textual criticism, historic method; such contemporary issues as modernism, fundamentalism, naturalism, humanism, evolutionism, etc.? What is meant by the "Word of God"? What is Lutheranism's very *raison d'être* as a distinct communion in the twentieth century? Has it fulfilled its mission as a distinct body?

Replying to these questions the contributors have given their own interpretations in their own way. As such they are in no sense official; rather they are personal and frank statements of individual opinion. Accordingly, no unanimity of either expression or conclusion was sought or expected.

If, by these essays, we may have succeeded in revealing how rich and complex is the character of Lutheranism and how difficult it is, as some seem not to have supposed, to give simple and easy definitions; if we may have presented, as we believe, a representative cross section of the thought that obtains among contemporary Lutherans in America; if we may have contributed to the literature which is being produced in honor of the two significant Lutheran anniversaries now being celebrated throughout the world, *viz.,* the four hundredth anniversary of the publication of Luther's Small Catechism, in 1929, and that of the adoption of the Mother Symbol of Protestantism, The Augsburg Confession, in 1930; if we may have pointed out some of the challenges with which modern thought faces Lutheran theology of the twentieth century; if we may have succeeded in eliciting the interest of the general reader in becoming better acquainted with the peculiar genius and character of Lutheranism as one of the most conspicuous Protestant forces in the world to-day; if we may have set an example in the art of sympathetic but frank discussion, however the divergent points of view, and thereby contributed to mutual good will; this book, indeed, will have served its purpose. Certainly, however received,

this Symposium is significant in at least one respect: it is the first time in the history of the denomination in America that Lutherans of different schools of opinion are met within the covers of the same volume to interpret the broad features of Lutheranism as a whole.

In view of the individual character of the Symposium, it is evident that there is no logical principle of order to be followed in arranging the contributions. Each contributor has treated the general theme in his own way and after his own fashion, thus, we believe, lending variety and making for interest. No attempt has been made on the part of either the writers or the editor to bring these pages into agreement or to constitute a consecutive series. We have, accordingly, arranged the material somewhat arbitrarily, taking into consideration the interests and inquiries of the general reader to whom the book is particularly addressed.

THE EDITOR.

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WHAT IS LUTHERANISM?

AN INTRODUCTION

I

LUTHER A. WEIGLE

[ONE of Lutheran America's most distinguished sons is the present Dean of the Yale Divinity School. It may well be said that in Dean Weigle Lutheranism in America has made one of its notable and splendid contributions to the wider field of evangelical Christianity.

He was born in a Lutheran manse at Littlestown, Pennsylvania, September 11, 1880. His father was the Rev. Elias D. Weigle, D.D., for many years president of the Board of Directors of Gettysburg Theological Seminary and a well-known Lutheran churchman in the East. Dean Weigle was graduated from Gettysburg College with a B.A., in 1900, and an M.A., in 1903, and with two years at Gettysburg Seminary. He spent three years in graduate study at Yale, receiving his Ph.D. degree in 1905. Ordained to the Lutheran ministry by the Alleghany Synod in 1903 he served a brief pastorate at Bridgeport, Connecticut. After a year's assistantship in psychology at Yale, Dr. Weigle was called to a professorship in philosophy at Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota, where he remained for eleven years (1905-1916), five of which he served as Dean of the College. During this time, for a number of years, he maintained his ministerial connections with the Lutheran Synod of Iowa, a district synod of the General Synod.

Recognizing in him splendid talents and achievements as educator, Yale called him in 1916 to the Horace Bushnell professorship of Christian Nurture, which chair he occupied with distinction until 1924. With the establishment of new chairs at the university, through the generous gifts of the Sterling Trustees, Dr. Weigle was appointed in 1924 to the newly created Sterling Professorship of Religious Education, which professorship he continues to hold. In 1928 he was made Dean of the Divinity School. For a number of years he has been a member of the New Haven West Association of Congregational Churches and Ministers.

Dean Weigle is the author of many notable books: *The Pupil and The Teacher,* 1911 and 1916; Editor, *Horace Bushnell's Christian Nurture,* 1916; *Talks to Sunday School Teachers,* 1920; *Training*

the Devotional Life (with H. H. Tweedy), 1919; *Training Children in the Christian Family,* 1921; *American Idealism* (Vol. X in *The Pageant of America* series), 1928; and, *Religious Education* (with J. H. Oldham, Vol. II of *The Report of the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council*), 1928. Among the many lectureships he has from time to time held may be mentioned: Holman lecturer on the Augsburg Confession, Gettysburg Theological Seminary, 1921; Sprunt lecturer, Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia, 1925; Avera lecturer, Duke University, 1926; Duncan lecturer, The Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, 1926; and the Norton lecturer, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, 1928.

Through the years he has been called to an ever-increasing number of high positions of trust. He has been president of the Minnesota Educational Association; member of the Council of the Religious Education Association; member of the International Sunday School Lesson Committee since 1915 and chairman, 1922-1923; director of the Congregational Education Society and Congregational Publication Society since 1917 and chairman since 1927; chairman of the Joint Advisory Committee for Sunday School Lessons in Foreign Lands since 1923; director and vice-president of the Congregational Home Board since 1927; member of the Executive Committee of the World's Sunday School Association since 1924 and chairman since 1928; chairman of the Commission on Christian Education, The Federal Council of Churches, 1924-1929 and, since 1929, chairman of the Administrative Council of the Federal Council; delegate to the International Missionary Council at Jerusalem in 1928; besides, member of many academic fraternities and associations.

In 1916, Carleton College conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Divinity; Gettysburg College followed with a similar honor in 1917; and, in 1925, Muhlenberg College conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Letters.—*The Editor.*]

William Penn, declaring his intention to found "a free colony for all mankind" and advertising his proposal in the various languages of Europe, was the first to attract Lutheran colonists in considerable numbers to this country. The effective organization of Lutheran churches began with the work of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, who arrived in Philadelphia in 1742 and gave forty-five years of unremitting

service to the planting and upbuilding of churches among folk of Lutheran heritage.

The General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States of North America, organized in 1820, owed much of its growing strength to the leadership of Samuel S. Schmucker, a young minister still in his twenties. In 1826 Schmucker founded the Lutheran Theological Seminary, and in 1832 Pennsylvania College, at Gettysburg. The General Synod soon came to use the English language chiefly. It declared adherence to the Augsburg Confession as "a correct exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God"—a statement which obviously permits freedom of interpretation. Schmucker earnestly sought to adapt Lutheranism to the needs of America as he saw them, and wrote much in exposition and defense of what he called "American Lutheranism." He published plans and proposals looking toward the ultimate unity of the Protestant churches, and he was one of the first advocates of the movement which culminated in the formation of the Evangelical Alliance.

But in the meantime the Great Immigration was beginning. In the years before the Civil War, this was chiefly from the north and west of Europe, especially from Germany and Ireland. The Lutheran Church, which had until then just kept pace with the growth of the country, increased three times as rapidly as the general population from 1830 to 1870. With this great influx of German immigration, a reaction set in toward a more strict, conservative adherence to the traditional positions of the Lutheran Church. Schmucker lost his influence and leadership; and "American Lutheranism" became a byword. Schisms rent the General Synod. New synodical bodies, based not only upon confessional differences but upon linguistic and national heritages, were formed. In the closing decades of the nineteenth century the Lutherans were the most polyglot and the most divided of the great Protestant groups in this country.

Typical of the conservatism which opposed such tendencies

as those of Schmucker and the General Synod, was the position of a group from Saxony, which settled in and about St. Louis in 1839, and became, under the leadership of Carl F. W. Walther, the nucleus for the religious organization of the German immigrants in the Mississippi Valley. Walther succeeded in doing what Muhlenberg had not tried to do—in maintaining the German language and requiring strict adherence not only to the Augsburg Confession but to the whole body of Symbolical books associated with it as "the pure and uncorrupted explanation and statement of the Divine Word." He founded journals for the dissemination of the "pure doctrine," and urged all congregations to maintain parochial schools for the education of their children.

The twentieth century has been marked by a trend toward union. Immigration has been restricted, and the old nationalistic differences no longer mean so much. The Great War helped to fuse all groups in a common loyalty as American citizens. The foreign languages have been largely replaced by English in the services of the churches. The four hundredth anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, celebrated in 1917, helped to establish a new morale and to center the minds of Lutherans, as well as of other Protestant groups, upon the really important things that they hold in common, rather than upon those that are divisive.

Outstanding evidences of this new trend are the coming together in 1917 of three Norwegian bodies to form the Norwegian Lutheran Church, the organization in 1918 of the United Lutheran Church, and the forming in the same year of the National Lutheran Council. The United Lutheran Church heals the schisms of the third quarter of the nineteenth century by bringing together the General Synod, the General Council, and the United Synod in the South; and again perpetuates unbroken the tradition that goes back to Muhlenberg.

Dr. Ferm, who edits the present volume, has already made a notable contribution to the literature of American church

history by his scholarly study of the storm that centered about Schmucker, entitled *The Crisis in American Lutheran Theology.* He has here undertaken to secure and to publish an interpretation of Lutheranism, as this is actually understood and practiced by ten well-known exponents of the Lutheran faith in America. These men are associated with different synodical organizations. They write as individuals, not as officially chosen representatives; and each has been free to approach the subject in his own way. The resulting collection of essays is most interesting and significant. It will contribute much, not only to mutual understanding among Lutherans, but to the understanding of Lutheranism by those who bear other denominational names.

WHAT IS LUTHERANISM?

II

JOHN O. EVJEN

[PROFESSOR EVJEN belongs to that inner circle of university-trained scholars in Lutheran America that for years has tried, often with misunderstanding to themselves, to maintain the dignity and value of theological research and to train its ministers to a place of learning that would command the respect of a modern discriminating world. A vigorous mind, scientifically trained, one that expects and welcomes new insights in the field of theology as well as in other sciences, has made him intolerant to anything that suggests superficiality and slovenliness of thought and to arrogant dogmatisms in sacred realms. Scholars abroad have recognized in him one of Lutheran America's most eminent exemplars of research and disciplined theologians.

A Norwegian-American by birth (he was born on December 13, 1874, at Ishpeming, Michigan), he received his academic training at Augsburg College, Minneapolis, Minnesota, A.B., 1895, and at Augsburg Theological Seminary, graduating in 1898. For more than three years he studied at Leipzig University in Germany, winning his Ph.D. degree in 1903. Twice he revisited Germany, in 1905 and 1907, spending his time in library research. In 1903 he was ordained by the United Norwegian Lutheran Church and served for a brief period the pastorate at Muskegon and Grand Rapids, Michigan. He has been a member of the Lutheran Free Church and is now connected with the Ohio Synod of the United Lutheran Church of America.

His has been the life of an academic man. He taught at the Lutheran Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1903-1905; at Gettysburg College, 1905-1909; Augsburg College and Theological Seminary, 1909-1919; President of State Teachers' College, Mayville, North Dakota, 1919-1923; at Carthage College, 1923-1924; and since 1924 at Hamma Divinity School. In 1928 Carthage College conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Theology.

His publications have brought distinction to his name: *Die Staatsumwälzung im Dänemark im Jahre 1660,* 1903; *Scandinavia and the Book of Concord,* 1905; *Christian Worship,* 1909; *En*

Boganmeldelse, 1910; *Et Kapitel fra Symbolforpligtelsens Historie,* 1911; *Lutheran Germany and the Book of Concord,* 1911; *Veiledning i den Lutherske Frikirkes Principer,* 1914; *Luther and the Reformation,* 1916; *Scandinavian Immigrants in New York, 1630-1674,* 1916; *Naadegaverne og Embedet,* 1920; *The Teachers College,* 1920; *The Berkenmeyer Library, a Two Hundred Years Old Church Library Found at Wittenberg College,* 1925; *Fra Scolvus til Sluppen, 1472-1825,* 1925; *Some Aspects of the Work and Requirements of a Graduate School of Theology,* 1926; *Luther's Ideas concerning Church Polity,* 1926; *Philosophy and Education,* 1927; *The Benediction, A Blessing or a Prayer,* 1928; *The Ministry and Ordination,* 1929; and, in preparation, *Kirche, Gnadengabe und Amt* (a contribution to *Festschrift* for Franz Rendtorff, to appear in Leipzig, 1930). He has been a contributor to many learned journals; also to *Herzog-Hauck, Realencyclopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche* (Leipzig), and to *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge.* For years he has been a co-editor of the *Luthersk Tidsskrift,* published in Minneapolis.

He holds membership in many learned societies both here and abroad. His church has sought out his services as lecturer and guest preacher upon the occasion of many of its important festivities and conferences. He is one of Lutheran America's most able theologians and well qualified to interpret the genius of Lutheranism.—*The Editor.*]

My first formal contact with Lutheranism dates from the period which an omniscient psychology is pleased to relegate to a step even far below the pre-adolescent. Being only a few days old, I was to be baptized. The Lutheran minister of the place where I was born and was to be reared, then the metropolis of the northern peninsula of the state of Michigan, insisted that a sponsor selected by my father and my mother—both Lutherans—should be a member of a Lutheran congregation. This sponsor, a sincere Christian believer, was living in a town some twenty miles away from my native city; this town had no Lutheran church. Having emigrated from Norway, where he was a member of the Lutheran State Church, he believed that membership in this Church was preferable, for the time being, to membership in a distant Lutheran con-

gregation, like the one in "my" city, or in a local congregation of another denomination, about whose tenets he knew as little as about his. But the aforesaid minister insisted on membership in a local Lutheran congregation as a condition *sine qua non* for sponsorship at a baptism conducted by him. There was an argument, and the prohibitory demeanor of the minister prompted my father to seek redress with the parson of the local Methodist Church, consisting mainly of miners from Cornwall, England. The Methodist parson baptized me. My father was not a theologian, but had the good sense to know that baptism, in its religious meaning, meant to be baptized into the Universal Church. The Methodist parson proved himself a better Lutheran than the refusing Lutheran minister, who was a better representative of Calvin, when he speaks of the local Church as the scabbard of the Universal Church, than of Luther, who knows only one Church—the universal, and regards a local "church," or an association of "churches," as a human organization; for, what is church in this organization is church not because of, but in spite of the organization.

That first formal contact, then, was with Lutheranism in its official, officious garment. Being an infant I could not sample it, not even could I express an opinion about the hem of it. But, advancing to adolescence and beyond it, I got many an occasion to sample and compare it with real, spiritual Lutheranism.

That native city of mine, where we grew up as bilinguists and trilinguists, had a good-sized Irish and French-Canadian population, all Catholic, about twenty-five per cent of the inhabitants. About thirty per cent were either from England or New England—mainly Methodists and Presbyterians, with a sprinkling of Baptists and Episcopalians. Forty per cent were Scandinavians, chiefly Swedes and Norwegians, and some Danes, all Lutherans. The rest had come from southern Europe. The Finns, a later accession, came in large numbers as a supplanting element, when others moved away. They,

too, were Lutherans. Here, in a well-organized church city, we watched, discussed and compared nations and denominations. The majority of us imbibed a cosmopolitan spirit: inter-denominational and inter-racial. The various groups lived more or less their own family-like lives, religiously and racially, but in sympathetic toleration of one another, as is very possible in an average-sized American city of some civic pride, where hard work is no shame, religious profession no disgrace, where comity and compatibility hold a reasonable sway. True, there were religious controversies, schisms, too, but within the family group. They, like a good many other happenings, served the cause of the pedagogy we needed.

Thus equipped, some of us started off for college and seminary. It was my good fortune to come to Augsburg College and Theological Seminary, Minneapolis, headed by the greatest Lutheran theologian that America has ever had, Professor George Sverdrup, whose biography receives more space [1] than that of any other "foreigner" (non-German) in Herzog-Haucks *Realencyclopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche,*[2] the largest repository of Protestant learning in existence. Augsburg taught spiritual Lutheranism to a high degree. After completing seven years in this institution I had the pleasure of studying in the Scandinavian countries and Germany, spending three and a half years in the University of Leipzig, where I sat for six semesters at the feet of that master church historian Albert Hauck, "guilty" of many "heresies," as, for instance, that Saint Patrick was not the Apostle of Ireland, his very existence being doubted; that Saint Boniface was not the Apostle of Germany; and Saint Ansgar not the Apostle of the North. I liked immensely the spiritual type of Lutheranism taught by Hauck and many of his colleagues at Leipzig, who were my instructors.

Returning to America, I tried to follow German schools of scholarship, preëminent in the field of theology, of philosophy and of history, also their related schools in Sweden, Den-

[1] 17,000 words. [2] xxiv. 537 seq.

mark, and Norway. I also endeavored to keep alive the memory of the fine contacts I had had abroad with theologians of other denominations than my own, men to-day in responsible positions of ecclesiastic and educational leadership in our own country. Somehow, though, the consciousness was growing upon me that, while the Lutheranism that I had learned to know near the shores of Lake Superior, and on the banks of the Mississippi, was pretty much a unit with that which I had been getting in Germany, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway, a considerable quantity of that Lutheranism which came across my mental horizon in some other parts of America was of a different hue and of a rougher edge. My favorite foreign authorities, even those classified as belonging to the Lutheran extreme right wing, were treated by zealous clerical groups in much the same way as Martin Luther, not so long ago, was treated in a book of American fiction. Luther, resurrected in our century, appeared before the examining committees of several Lutheran synodical bodies. He was seeking admission to the Lutheran ministry. Turned down as doubtful or heretical by synod after synod, he finally came before an ecclesiastical tribunal in Ohio. In course of the colloquy, a question is directed to him: Brother Martin, what do you think of secret societies? But when Brother Martin is to give the answer, the curtain falls. Therewith the book closes, leaving it with the reader to imagine the rest, and making the acceptance of Luther at least a possibility. All this, not so much posterior to the time when those pious and learned idols of mine by a curve of human predestination were being turned out of the domain of science and letters. This species of ruling, I confess, ruffled me a little at first, but I "got" used to it; and when America went to war in order to salvage democracy, I was not astonished that American Lutherans, at the end of the war, organized to salvage Lutheranism and thereby gave birth to a claim pretentious enough to be recorded in this challenging form, whatever the original text of it was:

Religion is the conscience of the world, Christianity is the conscience of religion, Protestantism is the conscience of Christianity, Lutheranism is the conscience of Protestantism, American Lutheranism is the conscience of Lutheranism! Nothing—loud, at least—was said as to the seat of the conscience of American Lutheranism. That piece of fiction about Luther left unsaid whether it might be in Ohio. It might have been St. Louis, or perchance Philadelphia. But that is a matter for official or officious Lutheranism to settle. It is of no concern for real Lutheranism.

As to the refining consciences catalogued above, the existence of the first may be as futile to prove as the locality of the last is difficult to map. The religio-psychologic school of Karl Girgensohn, based on fine work done by Carl Schneider, has posited that no man is without religion. Reinhold Seeberg claims that every human being is predisposed for religion. Karl Heim holds that the first thing in man is religion; the second is thought—something derived: in everything which man does he expresses an attitude for or against God. Brunner, of the Barthian school, primarily of Reformed, secondarily of Lutheran trend, holds that Christianity is not a religion, but rather the crisis of religion, all religions prior to Christianity being distortions of divine truth. My own teacher, Sverdrup, taught the same, thirty-five years ago: Christianity is the negation of all religions; it is man's reëstablished fellowship with God, through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. The word religion is never found in Lutheran translations of the Bible, *e.g.,* German, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, and it occurs less than half a dozen times in the English translation.

We may, as heretofore, comply with conventional usage, and call Christianity a religion, though the manifold definitions of religion, as collected by Leuba, show the danger of applying that name to Christianity. Leuba even includes magic in religion. But magic is the very opposite of religion, since it endeavors by sorcery to ward off the acts of God.

Leuba also includes mysticism, which merges the personality of one into that of the other, as the drop becomes a part of the ocean, thus making impossible the communion of two persons. For man, like God, is a person who can, as every other spirit, be it divinity or demon, angel or *anthropos,* say *Yes;* that is, express conscious volition, where animals work with instinct only. The danger of identifying Christianity with religion lies in admitting an evolutionary growth of religions culminating in Christianity as a natural process. This view, kindred to naturalism, forgets that Christ is not the result of evolution. If he were, we should expect a greater Christ in the future. It also forgets that the Life which Christ gave the world (call this life religion, if you will) is not the product of man's effort, either alone or in conjunction with God as a partner, but is a gift from above to a dying world, cosmically beautiful, but a world that is not now what it once was when it left the hand of the Creator. The present world is a kingdom of nature and history, where *a-deitic* Nature struggles against the Spirit, and where the purposes of good and evil intersect, until the kingdom of glory comes, in the form of a new heaven and earth, when "the former things are passed away."

Christianity is concerned with this Life-of-Christ (not primarily the chronological physical life of Christ as such) as a boon to mankind and to the rest of Creation.[3] Lutheranism concerns us as the mirror of this Christianity or Life-of-Christ. We mean something more substantial than Churchianity with its organized forms of polity, doctrine, and worship, though all this has significance. We mean the Christ-life pulsating in his disciples down through the ages, be it in changing forms, or in a flux that admits no form. Christianity is not an intellectual system of doctrines, an esthetical form of worship, a philosophy, a scholastic system of "knowledge raised to its nth power," as an Englishman has said. For, knowledge and Christianity lie on two different levels. Knowledge

[3] Romans viii (Nature reborn).

is concerned with the perishable world, Christianity with the imperishable, yet projected into ours through Christ.

Lutheranism is that spiritual understanding of Christianity which the creative years of the Reformation produced. It is the recovery of the substance of Christianity, lost for centuries. The chief cause of the Reformation was Luther's understanding of the Gospel. Hence the movement bears his name. His name implies no infallibility; here and there statements of his can be corrected by his own principles. But he was such a central personality in the mighty current which changed the face of Europe that no religious question of the mightiest century the world has seen, save the first, can be satisfactorily disposed of without first asking, What was Martin Luther's reaction to it? Yet the word "Lutheranism" does not appeal to me. In philosophy, any word ending in *-ism* is exclusive. Dualism excludes monism, and monism excludes dualism. Naturalism excludes spiritualism. Lutheranism cannot claim to be exclusive as an intellectual system or even as an organized "religious system." For this would mean *"extra ecclesiam Lutheranam non salus."* The German word "Luthertum" and the Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Dutch word "Lutherdom" have none of the exclusive implications of the Latin ending. Catholicism, on the other hand, means what it says: it excludes every interpretation but the Catholic, not only as false, but as heretical, involving the loss of eternal life, unless the church removes the penalty. Professor J. Oskar Andersen, of the University of Copenhagen, uses the word "Lutherdom" in his recent *Survey of the History of the Church in Denmark,* written in English. This word has nothing of the presumptuous quality of the term "Lutheranism." But: we may conform.

Lutheranism, if it is to be true to its most precious and central theological tenet—justification by faith alone—can accept no teaching that contradicts this tenet, even if such a teaching be found in confessional statements of the Lutheran Church. Creeds and confessions, as human attempts, oper-

ate with the philosophic auxiliaries of the age, especially its psychology. What seems intelligible to one age and in harmony with the central tenet, may contain a challenge to another, and invite a revision. In trying to set forth and defend the love and holiness of God against real and imagined detractions of these qualities by others, the best of creeds may unwittingly and unwillingly put forth a destructive negation. Creeds must, therefore, be measured by their positive tendency, by their religious content, not by their scholastic impact. Moreover, an accepted creed may not mean a correctly understood or practiced creed. The age of the Reformation, particularly the years 1520-1530, is perhaps the most creative age in the history of religion since the days of Paul. It produced Luther's two catechisms, the Augsburg Confession and the Apology of this Confession, penned by Melanchthon, the chief "symbols" of the Lutheran Church. They are found, together with the ecumenic creeds and the Smalcald Articles and the Formula of Concord, 1577, in the Book of Concord, published 1580. Lutheran Churches vary as to how many of these confessions should be subscribed to. Only one-third of the Lutheran Church accepts them all. But acceptance of all of them, or of one or two of them, may not admit of the same interpretation. Of the Reformation confessions, Norway and Denmark accept only the Small Catechism and the Augsburg Confession as symbols. That does not mean that they are not guided by the other symbols in the interpretation of the two officially accepted ones. In the controversy about confessional subscription in Sweden, some years ago, the high church party at Lund stood for subscription to only two or three of the symbols, while the low church party of Uppsala favored accepting the entire Book of Concord. What is determinative of Lutheran loyalty to the central truth of Christendom—salvation through faith by grace—is not the lineal measurement of creed, but spirit and life. The rather recent appearance of the branch of theology known as *Konfessionskunde,* dealing with the life and spirit

of church bodies, is a comment on the impotence of credal measurements. Our age cannot produce a confession like the Augsburg Confession or the Small Catechism. It is not religiously creative as the Reformation age was. The question is not, How many creeds does a Lutheran body subscribe to; but, Is it loyal to its confession? "Lutheranism has only one confession," says Ihmels. This confession is not the expression of sober theological reflexion or abstract speculation. It is the mirrored understanding of Revelation, an understanding gained through the experience that revelation from the Past becomes an immediate Present. The way of Luther and Lutheranism is from Revelation to Scriptures, and from Scriptures to confession.[4]

Confessions are not juridically binding, for we look for the spirit in them. Nor are they religiously binding; if they were, they would be on the same plane with Canon Law, making salvation dependent on the keeping of this Law. Confessions are of historical importance; but confession is of religious importance, being a spiritual quantity. To the extent that this spiritual quantity is present in present-day movements, which are continuously undergoing modifications—the present never being exactly the same as the historical past—we may recognize these movements as "ours." I have the right to call certain Presbyterian friends of mine Lutherans, they, again, may feel they have a right to "christen" me a Presbyterian, since historic issues of the past may have no direct connection with a present condition. No Presbyterian can refuse me the right of calling Romans 1.17 good Lutheranism. If the Presbyterian wants to call this verse good Presbyterianism, I have no right to forbid him. As a man is not what he was when a child, and may differ at fifty from what he was at thirty, so historico-religious movements, nourished by the Spirit of God, are not static. "Most of the controversies in Law are about written Law, not about what is real Law or Justice," says Spengler. Thus, most of

[4] Jelke.

the controversies about church, are about the historic past of that church. History is not to be discredited, *historism* is. But historism has had much unseemly frolicking in denominational domains.

The confession of Lutheranism is best mirrored in Luther's Small Catechism, which has seen one hundred and fifty translations, almost twice as many as the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, and the Catholic Imitation of Christ, supposedly by Thomas à Kempis. The Augsburg Confession is a most wonderful document, by Germany's foremost educator for centuries, a marvelously well-phrased compendium of Luther's thoughts. In 1930 Europe will celebrate the four hundredth anniversary of this magnificent instrument. Valuable as the Augsburg Confession is, it is, however, as Ferdinand Kattenbusch indicates, not everybody's fortune to be able to read it. I do not refer to its Latin, but to the exegesis of its weighty statements. Rudolph Sohm's splendid exegesis of its statements about church and the ministry, the "keys" and the state have shown how surprisingly true the assertion of Kattenbusch is.

The Formula of Concord bristles with theology. It was intended for Concord, but sowed increased discord. It was promulgated by the various governments, and its very preface—of, by, and for the governments—champions the principle of church-state government, a principle of compulsion, really contradicting the spirit of Lutheranism. In American Lutheran circles the Book of Concord enjoys, on the whole, a reverence comparable to that which is bestowed upon Talmud in some Jewish circles. The Lutheran layman in Europe is not required to subscribe to the "confessions" of the Lutheran Church; and, in the vast majority of cases, confessional subscription is not required of professors of theology. Administering the oath in connection with confessional subscription has been largely discontinued. This is not due to mental reservation of any kind or to any shirking of religious obligations, but to the growing feeling that the

oath has no place in a purely religious act. Where the minister is in service of the state church, he is generally regarded as an officer of the state, and as such subject to the oath.

Theological metaphysics has played a great rôle in the movements for unification of church bodies. Numerous colloquies have been held, especially in America, for the purpose of settling intricate points in dogmatics and for reaching agreements about them as bases for church union. Theologians of mysterious philosophic equipment have courageously attacked and settled, to the satisfaction of themselves and their colaborers in colloquy, great complexes in theology, which they have incorporated into articles of agreements for merging church bodies—and this pretty much with the aid of pre-Copernican dialectics and post-Napoleonic diplomacy. This method of bringing about church union has been read into the Augsburg Confession, Article vii.

But nothing is so strange to the Augsburg Confession as procedures of this kind. Article vii reads:

> *Item docent, quod una sancta ecclesia perpetuo mansura sit. Est autem ecclesia congregatio sanctorum, in qua evangelium recte docetur, et recte administrantur sacramenta. Et ad veram unitatem ecclesiae satis est consentire de doctrina evangelii et administratione sacramentorum. Nec necesse est ubique esse similes traditiones humanas, seu ritus aut ceremonias ab hominibus institutas.*

This article speaks of the one true Church which is to continue forever. It does not deal with a visible church, but with the invisible, the congregation of saints. Only believers belong to this Church. It is a real, but spiritual quantity. Membership in it is conditioned by personal belief, vital trust in the person of Jesus Christ as the only Savior. All true believers agree in the teaching of the gospel that Christ saves by grace. "*Doctrina evangelii,*" teaching of the gospel, says Theodor Kolde, does not refer to ecclesiastical doctrine,

dogma. On a par with the "teaching of the gospel" is the ministration of the sacraments, whose purpose is the same as that of the gospel: to proclaim and assure the believer of salvation by grace, these sacraments being gifts from God to man, not gifts, or sacrifices, from man to God. To this one church, also, the sincere Catholic believer belongs; but not because of what the Catholic Church as an institution does for him, by requiring him to worship the Virgin and angels and saints and to regard the Church, its priests and works as vicarious agencies of God—but in spite of all this. The believing Catholic, too, is saved by grace and is, as such, a member of the one true Church. He, too, seeks refuge in Christ, though he thinks that only Rome, as the sole authorized conductor to salvation can lead him to Christ. But fellowshiping with Christ is his great concern, if he is a true believer. He accepts Christ with a plus: the Church. At the consummation of salvation, he will have to drop the plus to the extent that it detracts from the work and grace of Christ.

The traditional Catholic is church-centric in his views. He identifies too much the visible Church with Christ. The traditional Reformed is Biblio-centric. For him the Bible is the plus to Christ. He trusts in the Bible, as the Catholic in the Church. He identifies Christ too much with a book, in which he finds Old Testament laws and regulations as binding as the gospel. Like the Catholic, he will have to drop this plus to the extent it, through his own misinterpretation, obscures the work of Christ. The Lutheran is Christo-centric—without a plus. But he, too, in violation of his Christo-centric principle, is apt to attach an unwarrantable value to some visible form of church—however, in a less gross manner than the Catholic. He is also apt to rate a book as a means of salvation, much like the old Reformed type. But for Reformed and Catholic, as for Lutheran, the belief in Christ alone saves.

To minimize grace because of intellectual or environmental

difficulties—thus disclaiming membership in the true Church because of leaning too much on this or that human scaffold—means to attribute a part of salvation to works. If a Protestant is a member of the true Church, because he understands grace, and a Catholic is not a member of this Church, because he cannot fully understand it, yet wants to be in communion with Christ—then insight partly conditions salvation, whereas grace alone conditions it, according to the Gospel. After all, the Catholic believer, too, thinks he sees the *grace* of Christ in his Church. We, as Protestants, see but little of His grace in that Church. However, is the Catholic believer to be condemned on account of this mistake, call it sin? But does not grace cover sin, even a multitude of sins? It is fine to have Saint Paul's profound conception of grace, but how many have it, and how many more wish to have it and to be as zealous and evangelically energizing as the Apostle from Tarsus!

But does not the Lutheran Church assert, that it, above all others, teaches the gospel rightly and administers the sacraments rightly? Luther, as both Rudolph Sohm and Wilhelm Walther have shown, did not make this claim. Neither did the Augsburg Confession. Lutheranism knows only one church. Wherever the gospel is preached *rightly,* this Church is active. That is, the Life-of-Christ is active in the Holy Spirit. What does it mean to preach the gospel rightly (*recte*)? It means to proclaim it in such a way that Christian life is awakened and nourished by it. Ministering the sacraments rightly means that they nourish (not destroy) this life. Wherever this awakening and nourishment of the Christ-life takes place, the Church, or the Holy Spirit, is operating. The Church is the work of the Holy Spirit. This preaching, or awakening and nourishing, is not confined to a pulpit or a church building. Preaching means proclaiming the gospel anywhere by any Christian—a teacher, a mother who tells her child about God, a friend who proclaims the gospel, in word or deed, to another friend or even to a foe,

be it in the form of the read Word, the recited hymn, conversation, or of one of the gifts of grace.

The Church of Lutheranism is not a Church of ministers. It is the Church of all believers, of charismatic gifts at work where and when the Spirit wills. All believers are priests in this church. The greatest calling man can have is not to be a minister, as Levitical thinking will have it, but to be a believer. Neo-Lutheranism, sponsored by Löhe, Kliefoth, Stahl, the Lund university theologians in the last century, and still flourishing in America, is too Romanizing to endorse Karl Heim's gospel-ringing statement, that a minister "can be nothing more to a man facing death than a consoling father and an interceding brother." Salvation, the whole of it, is of God, not of man.

Lutheranism, as has been stated, is Christo-centric. But in its historic development it has had periods of priest rule, ruthless polemics and autocratic interference from the state.

Luther had no preference for any particular form of polity, though he desired as much liberty as possible for worshiping groups. It is erroneous to make him a Congregationalist; for, he could find nowhere in Scripture that a small group had greater rights than a large group, or *vice versa.* To make him an advocate of the state or territorial church is equally erroneous. It is true that Luther suggested to the Elector of Saxony to help in the Church visitation of Saxony, but the suggestion came to the Elector as the one having the office machinery best suited to conduct this work, and not because of vested governmental authority. The case would be similar to one of our congregations inviting a learned theologian to investigate an ethical question and pass upon it, without giving him legislative authority. But the government in Luther's day took advantage of the occasion and assumed legal control of the Church against the express will and repeated protest of Luther. And yet, since the real Church was a spiritual entity with Luther, he could tolerate state rule in the visible Church; for this rule could not directly affect spiritual life,

but only deal with the secular. Were he with us to-day, it is altogether likely that he would prefer a state-church government, like that of Norway, to the synodic rule of a free church in the United States, the one form of government being no more by divine right than the other, in fact, both existing by human right. The Church could be governed by a pope, for all that, if evangelical freedom could be had for the Word. "Luther's aim was not the *autonomy of the congregation,* but the *autonomy of fellowship,*" as Heinrich Böhmer well says. Men of our day who desire one united Protestant Church, and even one united Christendom, really desire autonomy of fellowship, the breaking down of ecclesiastical walls obstructing fellowship. But they also hope for an outward unified, organized expression of this intercommunion as something willed by Christ. The Pope holds that this unification is a moral necessity, but possible only by way of Rome. S. Parkes Cadman seems to regard the merging of all church bodies into one as the fulfillment of Christ's prayer that " they all may be one," though the Greek text (ἕν not ἕις) implies no outward, organized union. Able theologians like Franz Rendtorff of Leipzig, and Karl Müller of Tübingen, maintain that Christ never planned any organized Church. Christ prayed for a spiritual unity, not a union consummated in Time. There is one Savior, and only one; one Christ-life, only one.

When the Lutheran Church at one time was ruled by the state, the clergy, partly in order to assert their own independence over against state authority, claimed that their calling was one of divine right in the service of the Church. They also accepted the added dignity of being employees of state by divine right. This double investment came dangerously near to making them the incarnation of something sacramental, in the eyes of the laymen. The laymen became the passive part of the Church, all activity of ecclesiastical character becoming the business of the minister.

Lutheran scholastic orthodoxy was heading for the same

danger. It identified its dialectically attained results with the pure faith. Faith in the New Testament meaning now came to be regarded as intellectual insight, as assent to a *gnosis.* Orthodoxy represented itself as the Word of God in interpretation. The common man failed to distinguish between the three quantities: the eternal Word, the Bible, and dogmatic formula. To him all this was the Word, hence, means of grace. Though the possession of this did not make him active in polemics against the Catholics and the Reformed, since he could not command Latin, the medium of discussion, he said Amen every time the controversial professors and parsons scored a victory for "pure faith" against the "enemy." In the meantime congregational life could thrive but little.

European Lutheranism has got beyond the stage of polemical orthodoxy and priest rule. But the aftermath is still at work in America. In the other denominations the development has been much the same as in the Lutheran Church. Zeal has often been tempered with but little wisdom. Only to the extent that spiritual Lutheranism succeeds in asserting essentials, what is its very nature, can rationalizing exclusivism, left to itself, perish of its own inherent weakness.

Lutheranism believes in a personal fellowship with God. The believer has direct access to God without institutional mediation, be it church or priest, canonic rite or dogma. That is, these things as such do not save. Lutheran Protestantism has been characterized by four watchwords: 1. Christ alone, which, negatively, means the rejection of all hierarchic mediation between God and man; 2. Grace alone, meaning the rejection of legalistic religion and the ascetic life-ideal; 3. Faith alone, signifying the rejection of the magic sacramental Church; 4. Sacred Scripture alone, which means the rejection of the principle of tradition (Girgensohn). These negations satisfy as far as they go. But putting the essence of Lutheranism positively, some people like to use the formulation by Twesten, in 1826. According to him, the Protestantism of the Reformation has two principles: 1. The

material, or justification by faith, which principle elucidates everything else in Christianity; 2. The formal, or Scripture, is the norm of doctrine.

It has been argued that these two formulations are unsatisfactory, because justification, as an act of God, and Scripture, as a historical document, are incongruent quantities. Therefore, a principle is to be sought, from which all fundamental thoughts of Lutheranism issue—in worship, doctrine, life. This principle can be expressed in one word: Grace. The essence of God is to give, in grace; the supreme ethical duty of Christian man is to accept (faith—lay hold of) what God gives. Christ, the Savior, is a gift to the world (John 3.16); Paul asks, "What hast thou which thou hast not received" (I Cor. 4.7)? Even the entire church, the Body of Christ, is organized through gifts of grace.

The Christ-life is given to us, not because of our deeds, but in spite of them. The doctrine of the gospel—saved by grace—is imparted to us "freely," not because of our intellectual insight into this doctrine, but in spite of it: to Jew or Greek—may we add to Protestant or Catholic. Even that which we call church "service," worship, is not a service of man for God, but God's gracious serving of man. In worship, man is a recipient, not a giver. The church edifice is for man, the beauty in it also. God needs neither. The elevation for the elements of the Lord's Supper is a table, as Paul says, and not an altar whereupon man lays a sacrifice. He offers no bread or flesh to be burned. He only receives. The silver offerings brought to the altar are not for God. He needs not our shillings. But our fellow men do, in order that they may be helped in hearing the Word preached. Even the singing is to edify man, not God. When it is a question of the relation between God and man, God is always the giver, man the receiver. That Jesus accounts the deed of man, done unto one of the least of his followers, as done unto Him, is an accounting of grace. As Albert Hauck has said: "*Es ist unfrommer Wahn, dass der Mensch Gott etwas*

geben kann; fromm sein heisst nehmen von Gott, alles von ihm empfangen." What man can "give" God, is his "heart," his body (person, with all faculties)—as a living and holy thankoffering, for the grace shown (Romans 12.1). Even the spirit of gratitude is the result of God's giving, spontaneous reaction to His unspeakable grace.

This comes close to the theological principle of justification by faith, an expression not found in Luther's Small Catechism, but nevertheless contained in "forgiveness of sins," implying eternal life and salvation.

But what about the "normal" principle, Scriptures? Is not Christianity a book religion; is not Lutheranism a process of "indoctrination"? No; Christianity is life. It was life long before the New Testament was completed, or even begun, in writing. Again: Did not God reveal Himself in the Bible; do we not need His revelation? We answer, God revealed Himself in history, to Adam, to Abraham and to thousands of others. Certain men were chosen for special acts of revelation, these acts were recorded after they had taken place. The Bible is the *record* of revelation, the documentation of God's revealed will in regard to man and what concerns man's religious life. The Law, in the Bible, is an incomplete revelation of God's will. Jesus Christ is the perfect revelation, the Word. The Word reveals God. This Word is the means of grace. The Bible, however, is the incomparable source for the knowledge of this Word, revealing God. The Bible is not an authority on geology, surgery, agriculture, law. Fallibility in dates or names does not invalidate the religious contents. Christ came not to teach science. At creation man got a mind, which in the course of centuries would discover the secrets of Nature and produce wonderful things in letters, sciences, and arts. No Christ was needed for this. But Christ was needed to reveal the Father, to show, and be, the way of redemption. No system of science or philosophy could have revealed the Father of Jesus Christ. Luther feels this in saying in the Small Catechism: "I believe that I cannot

by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to him." Then he goes on to show that the Holy Spirit has made this coming to Christ possible, in the believing individual and in the "Christenheit" (true Church).

Luther, in one place, defines the Word "as the reign of God, strong and effective in our hearts." The redemptive rule of God which entered history through Christ is at work in man. Sometimes Luther calls it the Spirit or the Gospel. Men like R. Seeberg, R. Sohm, and C. H. Scharling have emphasized this. Scharling calls the Word the "coursing gospel." The gospel—glad tidings of mercy—is the kernel of Scripture. This kernel Luther calls "*Lehre*" (doctrine). This is the only doctrine he was concerned about. The historical parts of the Bible concern him less. Luther was no modernist. Neither was he a fundamentalist like the early English theologian and philosopher William Occam, who taught that every Christian is obliged to acknowledge all the books of the Bible and accept their entire contents. Failing to do this constituted heresy. Here is a question of quantity. Luther had another view of heresy: A heretic is one who understands Scripture in another way than that which is demanded by the Holy Spirit. Here the question is one of quality. It is adherence to this latter fine principle of Lutheranism, which finds expression in the ordination formulas of the Lutheran Church of Norway and of Saxony. In these formulas they require of their ministers that they proclaim the Word of God as it is "contained" in the prophetical and apostolic writings and taught in the "confession" of the Lutheran Church. We make no attempt to decide as to the advantage of using "is" instead of "contained," or of *quoad* for *quia.* Evasive minds may find comfort where literalists tremble; the one is as removed from the Word as the other. Luther's criterion was "*Christum treiben.*" There is Law and Gospel in both of the Testaments. The nomistic mind turns both into law. The evangelical view finds the Gospel in both. Luther read the gospel into the ten commandments,

interpreting them in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount, which is not a new legislation, but a spiritual norm.

Lutheranism rejects the allegoric interpretation, so much in use in the Middle Ages. It welcomes constructive philologic and historic criticism, but is not wedded to the exclusive approach of classical philology. In Exegesis it has learned from patristic philology, the koiné, the religio-historical approach, the dialectic attack, the *form-geschichtliche* school, the rabbinical method, the psychologic application—from *Einstellung* to *Gestalt.* It grants free theological research, but knows very well that research is always correcting itself. It fears nothing from science following its *Eigengesetzlichkeit.*

In the pulpit, Lutheranism proclaims only that which is religiously assured, no theological hypotheses. Its fundamental message is God's grace in Christ, which makes the self-righteous man a poor sinner, and the poor sinner a child of God, certain of His love and ready to sacrifice and serve his neighbor in a love that must bear and suffer if needs be. The Lutheran pulpit, less than any other, discusses the technique of economics, sociology, finance, hygiene. The pew understands this better than the pulpit. The average sermon in the Lutheran pulpit is characterized by deep religiosity and simplicity of form. It abhors ostentatious rhetoric, though conventionality has allied it strongly with artificial rules of homiletics, especially in Germany. But this is a matter of form, not of content. Wilhelm Walther's sermons are didactic, but not dogmatic, refreshingly scriptural and constructive. Those of Ludwig Ihmels are full of faith and consolation, instruction and guidance, dealing with many modern problems. Ludvig Hope's sermons bring the auditor face to face with God, portraying man's inner life; Hope, a Norwegian, is Lutheranism's most finished lay preacher. Olfert Riccard, Denmark's most popular preacher, who recently passed away, had great gifts of illustration, without resorting to the story. His sermons are beautifully kaleidoscopic in

the treatment of home and nature as approaches to interest youth in Christ. Here, then, are four modern names among many other outstanding names, all of them with great power over language, in which every sentence counts—the opposite of a deluging oratory—and filled with the passionate desire of presenting the "one thing needful."

The sermon is the chief thing in what is called Lutheran worship. The oft-repeated statement that the Lutheran Church is a liturgical Church is only partly true. Historically, it has had no particular feud with liturgics. They are adiaphora. But to stress its employment of liturgy as one of its great recommending features, as is done by our æsthetically gifted Archbishop Söderblom, is needless. A church can be splendidly Lutheran even without a formal liturgy. As one of the best authorities to-day in the whole field of liturgics, Franz Rendtorff, has shown, St. Paul and Luther were both antiliturgical. Luther's "mass" was a temporary adjunct, a transitional aid. Later, it received canonic dignity and got many additions. The Church of Saxony, it would appear, has neither too much nor too little of liturgy. But it is no less Lutheran than the Church of Sweden, which, in form, shows only a minimum of deviations from Roman usages and retains so much of the romantic—even the Bishop's staff, which was a part of Archbishop Söderblom's ecclesiastical outfit on his visit to America some years ago. The Lutheran Church of Holland has practically no liturgy, it lacks altars. Nevertheless it is no less Lutheran than many other liturgical churches true to the Augsburg Confession.

Lutheranism measures values by purely religious criteria. It neither claims that there must be a liturgy, nor that it must not be. Its attitude is: It *may* be.

As the degree of Lutheranism is not to be decided by liturgy, so it is neither to be decided by architecture. Franz Rendtorff rejects the idea of a specifically Lutheran architecture. So does Albert Hauck, who compares the idea of building a church according to a dogmatic system as hopeless as

the attempt to build a concert hall according to counterpoint. See article *"Kirchenbau"* in Herzog-Hauck's *Realencyclopädie.*[5]

One of the gifts of the Lutheran Church to the church at large is congregational singing. What the Elizabethan literature is to England, the hymn of the seventeenth century is to Germany and Scandinavia. In religious depth and inwardness, in poetic beauty, and in the musical setting created for it, it is unrivaled in history. In a repository of one hundred thousand hymns there is, of course, a great variety as to quality. Names like Paul Gerhardt, of Germany; Kingo and Grundtvig, of Denmark; Landstad, of Norway; and Wallin, of Sweden, have a glory of their own in the writing of hymns. J. Sebastian Bach is the prince of composers in sacred music. Names of more recent writers and composers show that there is no decline noticeable, at least in Scandinavia. Even in the rendition of sacred music, the finest choir in America is at St. Olaf College, rightly proud of its musical genius, director and composer, F. Melius Christiansen. The ablest boys' choir in the world is the famous choir at the St. Thomas Church in Leipzig, Germany. Luther, himself, was a great hymnist. His hymns do not breathe the other-worldliness as many of the Reformed do. His attitude to this world was radically different from that of the Middle Ages, with its ascetic approach. He believed that God cares for all beings in this world: "If you weep, God has a golden platter for your tears." Hence the wholesome attitude of Lutherans to art. Nothing in heaven or on the earth or below it, was tabooed as an object of art, contrary to the older Reformed School, which understood the commandment about graven images literally. Hence, also, Luther's wholesome attitude to marriage. The Catholic Church, calling marriage a sacrament, yet regards it as a concession to the flesh, an institution too unworthy to be entered by a priest: in fact, a marriage must be performed in the presence of a priest that he may consecrate

[5] x. 774 seq.

it. To Luther, marriage is as sacred as celibacy. In his family life, he showed the world that the parsonage could be an asset in culture and civilization. For his day and age this was something new. Zwingli had married, but feared for quite a while to let anybody know about it. Calvin married, but his family life was austere, wanting the mirth and sunshine of Luther's non-Puritanic home.

One can hardly touch upon family life without alluding to evolution, which in autocratic terms claims to explain the origin of all life. In Lutheran circles of America, evolution has unfortunately been fought with the weapons of fundamentalism. In Europe it has received a hard blow in the World War. Such a well-informed philosopher of history as Spengler calls it a "caricature of justification by faith." This judgment reflects pretty well the attitude of Lutheran scholars abroad, who are as much removed from the naïveness of Bryan as from the still greater naïveness of a Darrow. It is now pretty well conceded that evolution, as a principle of explanation, is a liability, since it offers more problems than solutions. If it is applicable in the individual's physiological life, from birth to death, it is so because of the will of God. Neither evolution nor any other proffered explanation of origins is acceptable, if it in any way proscribes the all-activity of God, and prescribes limitations for His creative work as to time or method. Materialists are not the only supporters of evolution. Idealists also rally to its support. Among such idealists are those who cherish the belief that the world, as a whole, is continuously growing better, ending with the climax of a perfect world, the results of the Christianizing efforts of man. They identify the visible Church with the Kingdom, and overlook the fact that the Kingdom of God is a gift, and not the result of human effort. The kingdom of evil and the kingdom of good are both expanding. At present the former tolerates the latter, even makes outward use of it for selfish gains. But the day will come when the Good shall catastrophically conquer, and when

Evil shall be removed, not because of the employment of physical force in the form of war, nor because of any humanizing tendency called social service, or any other service which forgets the cross. Men may pave the way for the kingdom to come, but its coming depends on God alone.

Our comments on evolution have taken us to the domain of scholars. The vast majority of the universities on the continent of Europe are manned by men of Protestant training in Luther's spirit. This is the case in some twenty universities of Germany and in the universities of Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland—all famous graduate institutions—nourished by hundreds of splendid gymnasia or colleges. It is impossible to determine the percentage of influence exerted by Lutheran and by Reformed teaching, the many fields taught being neutral. But there is an objective spirit in these universities more kindred to that of an emancipating Luther than to that of any other Reformer. He stressed the *Eigengesetzlichkeit* of science and arts. In fact, as Albert Hauck says, "What Germany in a great measure is and what it means to the world, depends largely on the Reformation." The creative soul in this movement was Luther, above all others, assisted especially by Melanchthon. The curricula outlined by the latter are essentially to this day the backbone of higher education on the Protestant continent. Even the Swiss Reformed universities are at one with the German and Scandinavian in this respect. Theology has the same ramification in all of them, extending as far as to the University of Paris. Of another type is theology in Great Britain and the United States, where it consists mainly in apologetics and patristics on the theoretical side, and in homiletics on the practical side, being weaker in systematics and history. In the English language there is nothing like the church histories of Albert Hauck and Karl Müller, nothing like the dogmatics of Danes like Scharling and Madsen, and nothing like the History of Dogma of Reinhold Seeberg.

In another way the continental university groups differ

from the British and American. The former do not taboo any field of research; they all teach the science of Theology as a university science, on an equality with all other sciences, not caring for the arbitrary classification of Francis Bacon, who ruled out theological science, and passed his negation on to the French Encyclopedists. In Lutheran circles (I am speaking historically) *Wissenschaft,* or *Videnskab,* is a most comprehensive term; in non-Lutheran Protestant circles "science," which is only a section of *Wissenschaft,* rules a bit autocratically.

There is a third difference. British and American universities maintain the class system of Calvin and Loyola, the German and Scandinavian do not. The former elect presidents for life or during good behavior, the latter elect a new rector every year, and are the outstanding republics of the world, breathing a freedom to which the ex-president of Princeton, later author of the "Fourteen Points," was not quite resigned.

It is quite impossible to ascribe the whole development of freedom to Lutheranism as a purely religious movement. But as one of Luther's passions was to establish schools, so as to teach people to read the New Testament, in order that they might learn what gospel liberty was, so the evangelical school worked indirectly for the spread of *Wissenschaft.* As a historical ferment Lutheranism has also given to German Catholicism a content which is lacking in the more formalistic Catholicism of Romance lands. American Lutherans are apt to flash the statement that the Reformation was born in a university. This is consoling in the light of gentle hints from abroad that American Lutheran scholarship is a couple of generations behind that of the European; some even add one more generation to the indictment. If this be so, the "conscience" of the world's Lutheranism should be thoroughly aroused. Compared with the fine Lutheran literature published and bought, read and recommended in Scandinavia, not to speak of Germany, we may need some arousing. Much

of this literature deserves to be translated into English, even for the sake of non-Lutheran brethren who would appreciate it very much. But why create an "inferiority complex" by suggesting a better acquaintance with that foreign literature, especially among us who are "it," namely the "conscience of Lutheranism"; the engineers of world conventions at Eisenach, Copenhagen, and Chicago; the elect critics who maintain toward 19,000,000 Lutherans of Prussia a bit of the same attitude that made the status of Martin Luther so uncertain when he faced one of our tribunals at that fictitious visit of his in the Buckeye state. This leads to the question of what Lutherans call Unionism.

Many a Lutheran minister in our country, fearing "sinful Unionism," refuses to sit on a platform where a Presbyterian or a Methodist or a Lutheran of a little different shading than his own will be called upon to pray. If he is there by accident, he will manage to get down from the platform before the prayer begins or ceases. Such an attitude of mind and action is an acute perversion of Lutheranism and an attestation of a woeful ignorance about its spirit. In Europe it is pitied and ridiculed. In many quarters in America it fares no better; but there are those who persist in identifying this folly with martyrdom, and seek justification for it in the action of Luther at the Colloquy of Marburg, four hundred years ago.

When Lutherans and Reformed met at Marburg, in 1529, Zwingli maintained that the Lord's Supper was a memorial meal, and nothing more. Luther claimed that the *entire* Christ, according to human and divine nature, was present. Zwingli resorted to scholastic arguments and evaded the religious issue, though Luther wanted to avoid scholastics and bring the issue down to religion. In vain. Luther now took his stand with Occam, and tried to show *how* Christ is corporeally present in the Supper. He deduced from Zwingli's argumentation—an unwarrantable deduction—that Zwingli did not believe in the full deity and humanity of

Jesus Christ. The Swiss Reformer, on his side, regarded Luther's argumentation as Capernaitic, lowering the dignity of Christ. Both had been misinformed about each other. In the contention that Christ was not present, Zwingli was wrong; in the argumentation as to *how* He was present, Luther was wrong. Luther was right in maintaining the What, but wrong in asserting the How. He was right: the *entire Christ* is present. In order to prove this fact, he stepped beyond man's bound, and tried to show the How. Had he known what we know to-day, that the Greek term *soma* (body) means "person," the argumentation would have been simplified. The What, or essence, of Luther's contention is this, then: We get fellowship with the entire person of Christ. Calvin later put some of this person in heaven: the physical body; and the spirit, the rest of the person, he found present at the Supper. Luther rightly maintained that the entire person, in both natures, glorified, was present: full fellowship with him was given in the Supper. What more do we want than full fellowship with Christ? Is not that Christianity? In the right preaching of the Word, too, we get fellowship with God, but we do not stop to scholasticize about the How.

Luther's words, "You are of another spirit," were addressed to Bucer, one of the most clever minds of the Reformation, a compromiser. Politics was at stake at Marburg. The Swiss had come with the plan to unseat Luther as a leader, to take over the hegemony of the Reformation movement, to put the republic of Switzerland at the head of a league of Protestant nations, and to work for the protection of the faith of the Reformation against the Catholics, yes, to fight for it. Luther, who distinguished between *geistliche Gewalt* (persuasion by the Spirit) and *weltliche Gewalt* (compulsion), did not want to mingle the two powers. To him compulsory religion was not religion. He wanted no force to be used for the spread of the gospel.

That How in Luther's explanation was later turned into a

doctrine. It got the name of "Ubiquity," everywhere present. It has played the same rôle among Lutherans as predestination among the Reformed. The motivation is religious, and is, therefore, to be commended. But the resulting doctrinal structure belongs to the sphere of intellect, not to spiritual religion. To the sincere believer coming to the Lord's Supper, Christ will give Himself, His whole self, whether Luther's How is accepted or not.

Doctrine had its say at Marburg as at Nicea. Stockholm[6] wanted to give ethics a chance. But here, too, opinions collided, especially concerning the relation of the Church to the Kingdom of God. The Reformed delegation was inclined to stress the social work of the Church: This work was to build the Kingdom. The Church must not only preach, it must work. The Lutheran delegation, especially from Germany, was disposed to claim that the sole work of the Church is to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments: The world may be left to work out a social program. But the Church is not of the world.

Here, too, there were mutual misunderstandings. Real Lutheranism teaches that the Church is invisible, it is the Kingdom of God in the hearts of men. This Church operates only with spiritual means, and cannot operate with other means. What creates and nourishes spiritual life is the right use of Word and Sacrament. The printed word is visible, the wine and bread and water, too, but the real Word, the real Sacrament in spiritual effects is invisible. Besides the means of grace, the gifts of grace are at work. The entire Church of God is an organism, functioning through the gifts of grace. This organism need not and cannot be organized by human effort. Human organization can only be of indirect aid. The life of the true Church is of and by the Spirit.

However, these statements cannot apply to what Luther

[6] Reference here is to the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work at Stockholm in 1925.—EDITOR.

calls the artificial church, the *gemachte Kirche,* about which Rudolph Sohm and Wilhelm Walther have written so much. The "artificial" church can administer, *outwardly,* the Word and sacrament; it is subject to human regulations, and can adopt a social program as far as this is feasible. It must take care, though, that the social function does not supplant or belittle the Word-function.

Now, Luther himself would not have objected to the two-fold duties (Word-Sacrament + Social Service) of the visible Church. Here he would have agreed with the Reformed. But he would have differed with them in identifying the visible Church with the Kingdom of God. As an organization, the visible Church is an indirect auxiliary to the Kingdom, as English is to the proclamation of the gospel in England. But neither the visible organization as such, nor the audible English as such, is a part of the Kingdom. The Kingdom shall lose nothing, it is a spiritual quantity; it cannot divest itself of any material, for it has nothing material. But organization and—it is trite to say—English, like any other language, shall pass away in the new order of things. Not the Kingdom, but the auxiliaries. No one can measure the growth of the Kingdom by the amount of activity manifested in any indirect auxiliaries. The nearness of the Kingdom cannot be measured by man. The time for its final consummation cannot be set or accelerated by any form of organized humanity. Much of what is done by, and said in, a church will, as a spiritual value, enter into the woof of the Kingdom. Much busybodiness, untouched by the Spirit, will fade to nothing. How much an intensified "activism" in the church organizations will help the Kingdom, is beyond man's ken. Much, also, which takes place outside the organized Church may, touched by the Spirit, enter into the weft of the Kingdom.

What would Luther have said at Stockholm to the anti-activistic group of Lutherans?

"The true Church can use spiritual means alone, the Word

and the Sacrament, whether this Word be spoken or practiced. Everything which is in the true Church, the Kingdom, has been quickened by the Spirit. You, too, are identifying your visible Church with the Kingdom; and since the Kingdom uses only spiritual means, you think the visible Church, too, must use the Word and Sacraments alone. Your opinion has found a classic expression in a book by Brother Johannes Kunze, deceased. Kunze teaches that Lutheran Protestantism knows only one office, that of the public ministry, which, authorized by the Church, has to administer the means of grace and the power of the keys. This is *spiritual* work. But Reformed Protestantism has two other offices also, one for discipline and one for dispensing alms. Lutheran Protestantism regards the latter two functions as *secular* work.

"Now," Luther would continue, "this particular distinction between *spiritual* and *secular* will not do. It is arbitrary. The quickening Spirit must be added even to preaching the Word and administering the Sacraments. Otherwise, preaching and administering are in vain; for, they do not operate magically. The function which Kunze calls secular, is and will remain secular if the Spirit does not quicken it. But it need not be singled out as secular any more than the administration of the Word and of the sacraments be singled out as spiritual. Under the Spirit's influence it becomes a Deed-Word, revealing something about God and giving something from Him. If you eliminate social work in your visible church organization, merely because it is 'secular,' you may as well eliminate your vernacular, the printed book, and all other external means of communication."

The Reformed like to make the church organization as active as possible. Chalmers believed that the state had no right to dispense charity, only the church had. Luther would say: "Whether the deeds of mercy are done in a church organization or outside, there is no essential difference. The Inner Mission Work in Germany, as conducted by Wichern

and Bodelschwing; the Deaconess work connected with the name of Fliedner; the work of foreign missions supported by scores of mission organizations might also have been carried on by church congregations, more after the American fashion. The main thing is that this work of charity is done in the Spirit of Christ, within or outside the visible Church. It is not wrong for you to limit the public activity of the visible Church to teaching and giving the sacraments; neither is it wrong, if you add social work to your program. But all you do, if it is to avail in the true Church, the only Church, must be vivified, quickened, by the Holy Spirit. For, the Church is the work of the Holy Spirit."

This, I think, would have been the gist of Luther's comments at Stockholm. Smiles might have been his lot, perhaps suppressed laughter from some groups. His Lutheranism had not always been easy to understand. But to the substance of these comments, one—I do not presume to speak of the living—if he had been present, the distinguished jurist, Rudolph Sohm, unequaled authority on Luther's conception of the Church, would have added his sincere Amen.

I, for one, would have been happy to add mine to his. If, then, a chance non-Lutheran American neighbor of mine would have asked me for a list of a dozen outstanding twentieth-century works, most of them a *multum in parvo,* of only a few dozen pages, on Lutheranism, or saturated with Lutheranism—classics meriting to be translated—I would have given him a list like this:

Albert Hauck, *Die Reformation in ihrer Wirkung auf das Leben,* 1918 (pp. 112).

Hjalmar Holmquist, *Luther, Loyola, Calvin,* 1916 (pp. 320), Swedish.

Heinrich Böhmer, *Der junge Luther,* 1925 (pp. 388).

Karl Girgensohn, *Grundriss der Dogmatik,* 1924 (pp. 195).

Reinhold Seeberg, *System der Ethik,* 1920.

Wilhelm Walther, *Die christliche Sittlichkeit nach Luther,* 1909 (pp. 137).

Karl Heim, *Das Wesen des evangelischen Christentums,* 1926 (pp. 123).
Rudolph Sohm, *Weltliches und Geistliches Recht,* 1914 (pp. 69).
Franz Rendtorff, *Die Geschichte des christlichen Gottesdienstes,* 1914 (pp. 51).
Otto Scheel, article "Protestantismus," in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart,* IV, 1913.
H. Martensen-Larsen, *Folkekirken Folkets Kirke,* 1919 (pp. 104), Danish.
Ludvig Hope, *Kyrkja og Guds Folk,* 1923 (pp. 145), Norwegian.

WHAT IS LUTHERANISM?

III

HENRY F. OFFERMANN

[THE Lutheran Seminary at Mount Airy has a notable history of more than threescore years. From here has emanated that conservative type of theology, so widely influential in Lutheran America, which is linked up with the name of Charles Porterfield Krauth, its first professor of "systematic divinity."

The rapid changes that have come to the world of theological thought during the past quarter of a century have made the task of the present-day theologian surrounded by a conservative tradition exceedingly difficult. His is the task of effecting painful readjustments; the errors in heritage, if any, must be corrected and new insights assimilated. It would, of course, be hazardous to suggest what modifications to his theology the learned Krauth would be willing to make, were he living to-day; one thing is certain, however, he would be very much alive to current issues and anxious to meet this generation on its own ground.

Perhaps no department has undergone more rapid and significant changes during these latter days than that of biblical literature and biblical theology. Into this field and at such a time as this, Professor Offermann has been called to leadership. That he is achieving notably in harmonizing the good in the old with the good in the new is a reputation which has already come to him, though perhaps he himself is quite unaware of it. Students in his classes have found in him a most worthy guide and have acclaimed his leadership.

Since 1910 he has been Professor of New Testament on the New York Ministerium Foundation. His publications reveal the mind of a scholar and a specialist: *Im Vorhof. Ein Führer durch das biblische Altertum,* 1898; *Jesus—Wer Er War und Was Er Wollte,* 1923; *The Jesus of the New Testament* in *Theological Studies* (in honor of Dr. H. E. Jacobs), 1924; *Introduction to the Epistles and Gospels of the Church Year,* 1926; *Das Damaskuserlebnis in den Briefen des Paulus* in *Fest-schrift für Bischof D. Ihmels,* 1928. He has numerous contributions in religious and theological journals, notably in the *Lutheran Church Review,* the *Lutheran Church Quarterly,* and in *Monatliches Literaturblatt.*

Professor Offermann was born in Hanover, Germany, on July 11, 1866. From 1881 to 1886 he prepared at the Gymnasium at Stade, Hanover, and continued for three more years at Kropp Seminary. After his ordination by the Ministerium of Pennsylvania in 1889, he assumed charge of the Christus Lutheran Church at Camden, N. J., 1889-1893; for the next seven years he was pastor of the Dreifaltigheit Church of the same city; and in 1900 he moved to Philadelphia where, for twelve years, he served the Emanuel Lutheran Church. During the year 1893-1894 he pursued post-graduate work in Semitics at the University of Pennsylvania.

He has taken a prominent part in the activities of the Church at large. Since 1901 he has attended, as delegate, every convention of the old General Council and, similarly, those of the United Lutheran Church since its organization. He has served this latter body as chairman of its committee on church papers and as chairman of its committee on German interests. For years he has been a director of the Mary J. Drexel Home in Philadelphia.

In 1908 Muhlenberg College conferred on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity.—*The Editor.*]

"Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you" (I Peter 3:15). These words which the first of the Apostles and confessors among the disciples of the Lord addressed to the sojourners of the Dispersion in Asia Minor, may serve as the starting point for the present discussion. They express the writer's personal attitude to the general theme with which this volume deals. And they may indicate to the reader the manner in which the questions involved in the treatment of the theme have been approached, as well as the spirit in which an answer to these questions has been sought.

What is Lutheranism? The question is not a purely historical question, but one that concerns the religious beliefs and convictions of millions of Christian believers to-day. If Lutheranism would be nothing more than a religious movement of the past and, as such, had been limited in its sphere and influence to a definite period of the Church's history at a time far removed from our own, it might be possible to

look upon it with the eyes of a neutral observer and to discuss its origin and history, its faith and doctrine, its life and worship, its place and significance in the history of the Christian Church, and all other questions concerning it, with a detached mind, free from all bias and prejudice, with that degree of "historical objectivity" which every scholar is generally supposed to bring to the investigation of any given historical subject—though it is well to bear in mind that "historical objectivity" has always its very definite limitations.

Yet, since Lutheranism is not only a religious movement of the past, but also one of the vital forces in the religious life of present-day Christianity, the rôle of a neutral observer with regard to it is impossible; and it is utterly out of question for one who has always regarded the Lutheran Church as the spiritual house of his fathers and whose own religious life is deeply rooted in Lutheran faith and Lutheran piety. In other words, an interpretation of Lutheranism, its spirit and history, its distinctive marks and fundamental principles, by one who is a Lutheran himself will always bear the marks of subjectivism. It will be in the nature of a personal confession. In the last analysis, it will be a statement of the reasons for the faith and hope that are in him.

Such an interpretation of Lutheranism, however, which approaches its subject from within rather than from without, has its very decided advantages over all other ways of approach. It is neither apologetic nor polemic, neither dictatorial nor controversial, but the simple and positive statement of the principles of Lutheranism as they are understood and interpreted to-day by one or more of their own followers, and as such it should be of considerable value, first of all to those who find themselves outside of the Lutheran faith and confession, no matter what their own personal reaction to the Lutheran faith may be. It should help them to understand the historical development of Lutheranism as it can be traced from its origin in the Lutheran Reformation of the sixteenth

century to the present time. Above all, it should help them to form their own independent judgment as to the relation of present-day Lutheranism to historic Lutheranism, to decide for themselves the question whether the true spirit of Lutheranism has remained unchanged throughout the centuries, whether Lutheranism still is a potent factor in the religious life of Protestant Christianity to-day.

An excellent illustration of what we mean is furnished us to-day by the example of Karl Barth, one of the foremost religious thinkers and theologians of our time. Karl Barth is not a Lutheran, but a theologian of the Reformed Church. His theology presents many problems, and one of the most interesting as well as one of the most important of these problems concerns the relation of his theology to the fundamental principles of historic Calvinism. The service which this modern interpreter of Calvinism has rendered, not only his own Church, but also other Christian communions, is a challenge to every Lutheran theologian to render a similar service to the cause of modern Protestant Christianity from the standpoint of confessional Lutheranism. The Church of the Reformation must no longer hide her light under the bushel. She must no longer avoid her duty to proclaim and interpret her message to the world, to set forth with clearness, and in terms of modern thought, both what she has in common with and what distinguishes her from other types and forms of Protestant Christianity. She must endeavor to restate her faith in the language and thought-forms of the time, especially as it relates to modern religious issues.

We may cherish the hope that such an interpretation of Lutheranism will be of service also to its own adherents and followers. If we are not mistaken, it was von Hofmann, the founder of the Erlangen school and one of the most original thinkers of the Lutheran Church in the nineteenth century, who once made a statement to the effect that Lutherans, wherever they may live and however widely they may differ, are all one in the confession of the same faith, but that each

and every Lutheran theologian has and must have his own theology. The statement itself may be open to criticism. But it will serve to make clear a distinction that is of vital importance for the present discussion. This distinction has reference to the relation between faith and theology. Faith and theology are inseparably bound together. But they are not one and the same thing. Theology is the scientific expression and interpretation of faith. Christian theology has its source and its object in the Christian faith. And a living faith will always express itself in a living theology. In this sense we may speak of a Lutheran theology which aims to express the essential characteristics of the Lutheran faith. But in every age the same faith will have to seek new ways of approach and new forms of expression in order to satisfy the needs of its followers. And this is the particular task of the theologian.

The present discussion concerns itself with only two of the fundamental principles of Lutheran theology. They are substantially the same as those which were formerly known as the material and the formal principle of Lutheran Protestantism.

I

No one will deny that the true spirit of Lutheranism is the spirit of faith, in the sense in which the Apostle Paul wrote to the Roman Christians: "We reckon that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law" (Rom. 3:28). Every Lutheran believer will also most heartily agree with the words of the same Apostle: "Having the same spirit of faith, according to that which is written, I believed and therefore did I speak, we also believe and therefore also we speak" (II Cor. 4:13). But it is one thing to have the spirit of faith, and it is another thing to give expression to this spirit of faith by word of mouth.

Faith in the true sense is trust in God's forgiving grace and love for the sake of Jesus Christ. It is an inner attitude of

the heart to the One in whom we believe. Its object is not a particular doctrine or a set of doctrines, but the living God himself who has promised to accept us as His children for the sake of his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. The *sola fide* of St. Paul is also the heart of the Lutheran faith.

Yet, though faith is trust in God's grace and mercy for Christ's sake, it includes the knowledge and acceptance of those facts upon which our trust is founded. The *fides qua creditur* (subjective faith) can never be separated from the *fides quae creditur* (objective faith). We believe, but we also know why and in whom we believe. In their definition of faith our Lutheran theologians have therefore correctly distinguished three elements: (1) *notitia* (knowledge); (2) *assensus* (acceptance); (3) *fiducia* (trust, confidence). Yet it is well to bear in mind that these elements do not represent three successive stages in the origin and development of faith, nor are they in every respect coördinate. The essence of faith is trust. Trust is not without knowledge. Yet the degree of trust does not always correspond to the degree of knowledge with which it is associated. An insufficient knowledge of the facts upon which our faith rests may go hand in hand with a strong faith, and, *vice versa,* a merely intellectual knowledge and acceptance of the facts that are the foundation of our faith does not yet constitute saving faith in the true sense of the word; for "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:10).

Faith and confession are always inseparable companions. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. 12:34). A living faith expresses itself in a living confession. It is like a light that must shine, like a rose that will spread its odor. It is "like a tree planted by the streams of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in its season."

Such an expression of faith in a living confession may be the confession of an individual believer, or it may be the confession of a group of believers. But in either case, if it is true

faith that thus expresses itself, it will contain the three elements by which faith itself is characterized: it will be an expression of the trust that is in the heart, and this trust will be associated with a knowledge and acceptance of those facts upon which it is founded. It also follows that a common faith will inevitably lead to a common confession. And if the spirit of Lutheranism is the spirit of a distinct faith, it is inevitable that all who have this same spirit of faith will also express their oneness in the faith in a common confession of faith.

It is this intimate connection between faith and confession that has always been one of the most distinctive marks of Lutheranism, since the time of the Reformation. Faith is the soul of Lutheranism, confession of this faith is its body. Luther, himself, was more than a reformer; he was even more than a defender of the faith. He was the first and foremost confessor of the Church of the Reformation in the long line of those that followed him. And his followers to-day would entirely misunderstand the true spirit of Lutheranism if they would no longer regard it as their highest privilege and their most sacred duty to be confessors of the same faith. Confessional Lutheranism is something more than traditional Lutheranism. It is the expression of a living faith in a living confession that extends in an unbroken line from the time of the Reformation to the present time.

This common confession of Lutheranism is greater than any of the historic confessions of the Lutheran Church, and it is greater than all the historic confessions of the Lutheran Church taken together. The historic confessions of the Lutheran Church occupy an important place and play an important part in the common confession of Lutheranism. They are the classical documents of the Lutheran faith from the formative period of the Church of the Reformation, and Lutherans will always go back to them when they are asked by others, or when they ask themselves, what Lutheranism is. They testify to the faith which the fathers and first confessors

of the Lutheran Church held and which as a precious heritage they delivered to their children. They are the common bond by which Lutherans of all lands and tongues, at all times and in all parts of the world, are firmly bound together, and by which they are distinguished from their fellow Christians in other Christian communions. And because they are officially recognized and accepted by the Lutheran Churches in the world, both in the past and in the present, as a true exposition of the Word of God, they come to us with an authority that is second only to the authority of the Word of God itself. Their authority is not to be understood in the legalistic sense, nor is it of an external nature. It is a significant fact, however, that a reawakening of Lutheran faith and consciousness has always led to a finer and deeper appreciation of the historic confessions of the Lutheran Church, just as a decline of Lutheran faith and consciousness has usually been connected with an attitude of indifference to the historic confessions of the Lutheran Church.

Yet the historic confessions of the Lutheran Church are not the whole of the Lutheran confession. The very fact that they are historical documents which originated in a period of the Church that is removed from the present time and generation by several centuries, may be taken as sufficient proof that they were primarily intended for their own time and generation. And they are not the only voices of their time in which the common faith of Lutheranism has found its expression. One cannot understand Lutheranism who does not know Luther himself. And though none of Luther's numerous writings have been accepted by the Lutheran Churches as part of their historic confessions, except his two Catechisms and the Smalcald Articles, it may well be claimed that all his writings make a most valuable contribution to the common confession of the Lutheran Church. Nor must we forget the vast Lutheran literature of the Reformation and the post-Reformation time, in which Lutheran theologians and writers have either expressed their faith or defended it

against those who were opposed to it. And what a wonderful treasure of Lutheran faith and piety does not the Lutheran Church possess in her hymns, songs and prayers, with their far-reaching and immeasurable influence upon the hearts and lives of her members!

In fact, Lutheranism has at all times been able to give expression to its faith through many of its followers and in many different ways. It is true their voices are not always clear and distinct. The harmony of their voices is sometimes broken or disturbed by jarring notes and discords. But those who have a discerning mind and know how to judge spiritual things spiritually will not fail to discover in the chorus of sounds and voices, in spite of all its discords and disharmonies, the same melody, the note of a common confession which is the spontaneous and direct echo of a common faith.

When we consider the historic confessions of the Lutheran Church in the light of this common confession, we shall be able to appreciate them all the more in their true value, as witnesses to the same faith that is within us. Each of these confessions serves its own particular and specific purpose. Each of them is a child of its time and bears the marks of the historical conditions by which it was occasioned and out of which it has arisen. And in their study and interpretation, as well as in their valuation, those conditions must be borne in mind.

The Augsburg Confession, written by Melanchthon, is the first positive declaration of the faith held by the Reformers and their followers. It is clear and simple, and because of its simplicity, its moderate tone, its lack of technical theological terminology, its evident desire to win the good will of all fair-minded Christians and to give an answer to all who, whether intentionally or unintentionally, had misrepresented the doctrine and teachings of Luther and the Reformers, it has become the common bond of union between all Lutherans, the banner around which the Church of the

Reformation has at all times and in every place gathered all her scattered members.

Yet, though the Augsburg Confession, because of its historic significance and its ecumenical character, rightfully holds a place of distinction among the historic confessions of the Lutheran Church, and though it is regarded in some parts of the Lutheran Church as the sole confessional standard, it is rather a mechanical and arbitrary way and not in harmony with the historical development of Lutheranism to isolate it and separate it from the other Lutheran confessions: The Apology, the two Catechisms of Luther, the Smalcald Articles and the Formula of Concord.

The Apology is so intimately connected with the Augsburg Confession itself that it is not a new confession at all, but the best authentic commentary and defense of the original document, throwing important light upon its meaning by a fuller exposition and discussion of its most disputed articles of faith and doctrinal statements.

The Smalcald Articles, originally prepared by Luther for an Ecumenical Council, with their bold, clean-cut and incisive statements of the faith and doctrine of the Reformers, are one of the best expositions of the central article of justification by faith, the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae,* which the Church of the Reformation in her struggle with Romanism has produced.

Luther's Small Catechism has a history all of its own, and in this jubilee year of its four hundredth anniversary much, though not too much, has been said and written about its glorious history, its spiritual and educational values, its devotional and doctrinal significance and its widespread influence upon the religious life of millions of people in all lands. No one can deny or even doubt that it deserves a place among the historic confessions of the Lutheran Church. But it may be questioned whether the value of this little book, which was originally written for the instruction of the young in the fundamental truths of the Christian faith, as an ideal con-

fession of the Lutheran faith has ever been fully set forth or even been fully realized. If Lutheranism is a form and type of Christianity with a message of its own and if this message is deeply rooted in the Gospel itself, there is no other literary document of the Lutheran Church which brings out the truly ecumenical character and the world-wide mission of the Lutheran faith and confession with the same clearness, brevity and warmth, as this little book presents it. It is entirely untheological in its form. As a medium of instruction for the young it is admirably adapted to their needs and is therefore written in the plainest and simplest language that can be understood by all. Its statements are as clear as crystal, its faith is as pure as gold. It is "religion pure and undefiled." No other Church has anything that can equal it.

And yet this little book is full and explicit, a storehouse of information for the scholar, a handbook of the Christian faith for young and old, the plain people and the learned theologian. The study and interpretation of the other Lutheran confessions will always be limited to a relatively small number compared with the large number of all those who bear the Lutheran name. But wherever Luther's Small Catechism is the basis of religious instruction and wherever the followers of the Lutheran faith find in the simple statements of this little book an expression of their own faith and religious convictions, the spirit of true Lutheranism is still active.

Luther's Small Catechism is a little Bible, and like the Bible itself, it has in it an element that is timeless, something that lifts it above the historic conditions and circumstances of the particular time in which it originated and to which it belongs. In order to understand Luther's Small Catechism it is not necessary to modernize it, to translate its statements from the language and thought-forms of the sixteenth century into the language and thought-forms of modern times. It breathes the spirit of true faith, and by its widespread usage and influence it forms a more real and more powerful bond

of union between Lutherans of all lands than any of the other historic confessions of the Lutheran Church. And its mission is not yet fulfilled; it will continue to have an important part in the unification of the Lutheran forces of the world. But it may have a wider mission than that, a mission and a message for those who are to-day earnestly striving to effect a closer union and coöperation between all the forces and groups of Christendom on the basis of a common confession of faith. Lutherans are not especially eager to take an active part in these endeavors. They are conscious of their duty to preserve and safeguard a most precious heritage. They are not willing to jeopardize the truth and to exchange the unity of the spirit for an external union. And the modern formulas, whether they are based on "faith and order" or on "life and work," do not appeal to them. But they have to offer their fellow Christians something that is infinitely better than any modern formula, on the basis of which all Christians might unite. In Luther's Small Catechism they possess a real confession of faith, which is positive and definite, clear and simple, ecumenical and universal. A serious study of this little book by other groups of Christians would be a real contribution to that union of Christendom which is the desire and prayer of so many Christians of our time.

The brief statements of the Christian faith in Luther's Small Catechism are more fully explained and expounded in the Large Catechism. Both books have their rightful place in the list of the historic confessions of Lutheranism, and both are a splendid contribution to the catechetical and devotional literature of the Church of the Reformation. But the larger catechism is not as widely known as its merits deserve, for it is not only an excellent comentary on the smaller book, but has also its own distinct value as a warm-hearted and lucid exposition of the fundamental truths of the evangelical faith. The tremendous influence of Luther's Small Catechism has perhaps unduly overshadowed the

importance of its bigger brother with which it stands on the same level.

The Formula of Concord is the last of the confessional standards of the Lutheran Church. It is a more elaborate document than the others, and it was occasioned by controversies that had arisen within the Lutheran Church itself, after the death of the great Reformer. It was intended to settle these controversies, to bring back the peace that had been so sorely disturbed. Each article of faith which had become a bone of contention is most carefully gone into. Arguments are met by counter-arguments, until conclusions are reached that leave no loophole for any hidden heresy or any ambiguous statement, by which the faith and unity of the Church might again be disrupted or endangered. Compared with the earlier confessions of the Lutheran faith the Formula of Concord bears a more theological character. Yet its value as one of the confessions of the Lutheran Church lies not in its theological argumentation, the stringency of its logical conclusions, its historical references and scientific methods, but in the positive declarations that are intended to safeguard the true meaning of every article of faith in the earlier confessions against any possible misunderstanding or misrepresentation. To assert that the authors of this document have failed in their purpose, to characterize this document, which is called the Formula of Concord, as a Formula of Discord, and to attach to it the odious stigma of a new scholasticism, is either ignorance of the historic conditions out of which it arose, or the inability to distinguish between faith, the confession of faith and the theological formulation of such a confession.

The historic confessions of the Lutheran Church are accepted by Lutherans as the standard and norm of their faith and life, their doctrine and practice. But it is the confession *within* these historic confessions that is the important thing. And it is the faith *back* of that confession which is the very heart and soul of them. It is this faith which con-

nects them, not only with the faith of the ancient Church as it is expressed in the Ecumenical Creeds, but also with the faith that is a living possession in the hearts of the believers of the present time and generation. When Lutheran ministers to-day subscribe, without any mental reservation, to the confessions of their Church and accept them as the norm and standard of their own teaching and preaching, they do not feel that they are asked to take upon themselves a burden too heavy for them to bear. They do not regard the confessions of their Church as obsolete and antiquated literary documents, which are entirely out of tune with the spirit of modern Christianity and therefore are a hindrance rather than a help to them in their ministry. They do not look upon them as so many chains forged around their ankles, with the sinister intention to restrict them in their freedom of action. They subscribe to them, and they do so willingly and gladly, because they find in them the confession of the same faith that is in their own hearts.

Lutheran ministers need not close their eyes to the fact that the confessions of their Church are historically conditioned, that those who wrote them were fallible men and children of their time. They can also readily admit that these confessions do not solve all the religious and theological questions that arise out of the present condition of the world, and that some of the questions with which they are concerned are seen by us to-day in a somewhat different light. What some of us will have to learn is the simple and obvious fact that there is a difference between truth and the formulation of truth, between faith and the expression of faith, between the substance of a confession and its form. But when we have once learned this distinction and know how to apply it, we shall rejoice in the fact that the spirit of Lutheranism as it has expressed itself in the historic confessions of the Lutheran Church is not affected by the spirit of the times.

However, in view of the changed condition of the world

in which we live to-day and of which we ourselves are a part, the question may be asked and sometimes is asked: Are the historic confessions of the Lutheran Church sufficient for our present-day needs? Or do we need a new confession in order to set forth in clear and unmistakable terms the faith of the Lutheran Church, especially as it relates to modern issues and problems of which our forefathers did have and could have no knowledge? To ask such a question is in itself no sign or indication of heresy, nor does it detract anything from the abiding and binding validity of the historic confessions of Lutheranism. Theoretically, the right of the Lutheran Church to express her faith in a new confession of faith cannot be disputed. In fact, any solemn declaration of certain fundamental principles and doctrines by larger groups of Lutherans may be termed a confession of faith for that particular group, and if all the Lutheran groups would accept and adopt such a declaration of principles as their own, we would then have another confession of faith, added to the historic confessions of Lutheranism.

The question of a new Lutheran confession, however, is not a theoretical, but a practical question. It is not a question of principles, but a question of expediency. And looking at it from this point of view, it seems extremely doubtful whether we are really in need of such a new confession of Lutheran faith and doctrine. It may be argued, and on very good ground, that the historic confessions of Lutheranism, which have stood the test of time, are even to-day entirely sufficient to meet all our needs. At all events, a new confession of faith, if it should ever be found necessary to formulate and promulgate it, could be nothing but a restatement of the old faith in modern terms of speech.

If the need of a restatement of the Lutheran faith in a new confession is not one of the urgent needs of present-day Lutheranism, the same cannot be said with regard to a restatement and interpretation of the common faith and confession of Lutheranism in terms of modern theological thought. In

fact, there is perhaps no duty more imperative for the Lutheran Church to-day, especially for the American Lutheran Church, than the duty of her scholars and theologians to furnish her members with an interpretation of the Lutheran faith in a theology that is thoroughly positive and Lutheran and yet will satisfy at the same time the deeper needs of those who, in a world of unbelief and doubt, of materialism and strange religious and philosophical vagaries, are searching for the truth and are looking for a firm foundation upon which they can build the house of their life. There was a time when Lutheran theologians were busily engaged in creating a theology that was intended to satisfy the demands of the day. We have in mind the great theological systems of the Lutheran dogmaticians of the seventeenth century. They have built upon a solid foundation, and they have built well. Their works still command our respect and admiration, and it is only ignorance that can speak of them with contempt or characterize their authors as the representatives of a dead orthodoxy.

But the theology of orthodox Lutheran Protestantism in the seventeenth century is no longer the scientific expression of the Lutheran faith for our own day and generation. The scientific apparatus with which their representatives worked has become obsolete and is worn out. The arguments used by them do no longer make their appeal to the minds of modern men. Many of their dogmatic definitions, which are the result of their dogmatic labors, do not answer the questions that are uppermost in the minds of men to-day.

The reawakening of Lutheran consciousness in the first half of the nineteenth century resulted in a new type of Lutheran theology. Its representatives are not all alike. Some of them stand closer to the theology of the seventeenth century than others. Many of them are under the influence of Schleiermacher or the philosophical systems of Kant and Hegel. But all of them are characterized by the uniform tendency to preserve the spiritual heritage of the Lutheran

Reformation and to present it in a form adapted to the needs of their own time and generation.

The influence of this theology of confessional Lutheranism in the nineteenth century is still felt in the religious and theological thinking of the Lutheran Church of our time. But we must not forget that the world is constantly changing. What was taken for granted and accepted by all, without question, twenty or thirty years ago is now no longer beyond dispute. New discoveries have been made in the realm of human thought as well as in the world of nature, and these discoveries have changed not only our whole mode of living, but also our whole outlook on life. For example, the field of historical investigation has become widened so as to include not only the origin and history of the Christian religion but other religions as well. Our eyes have become trained to the analogies that exist between early Christianity and other ancient religions, especially those that were imported from the East and entered into a process of amalgamation with Greek life and thought. The religion of the Hellenistic age is a much more complex thing than scholars used to believe some twenty or thirty years ago. And just as important perhaps as in the field of comparative religion are the discoveries and new theories in the field of religious psychology. Experimental psychology is applying its exact scientific methods to an investigation and analysis of the varieties of religious experience and the phenomena of faith, and Christian theologians cannot afford to ignore the results of such investigations.

What we need to-day is not a new faith or a new confession of faith, but a new interpretation of that faith and confession. What we need to-day is a new approach to the truth which the believer possesses in his faith, and new methods to establish anew the certainty of this truth in its relation to all other facts of human life and human knowledge. It is not a solution of the problem to assign religious truth and scientific or historical truth to two different com-

partments of the soul. For the truth is one as God himself is one. And we look to the theologian to show us the way that will lead us to a conception of the truth which will fully satisfy the demands of our faith and at the same time will not be antagonistic to other fields of human knowledge. What we need to-day is a theology in which the spirit of Lutheranism, the spirit of the Lutheran faith and confession, will find its adequate expression for our own time and generation.

II

The spirit of Lutheranism is the spirit of faith. This faith expresses itself in a common confession of which the historic confessions of the Lutheran Church are the officially recognized standards. The confession of faith remains the same for all times; but in every time and generation it must be interpreted anew if the spirit of Lutheranism is to become a living possession of the believer. In these brief statements we may sum up the result of the first part of the present discussion.

But the historic confessions of the Lutheran Church are the norm and standard of Lutheran faith and life, doctrine and practice, only because and only in so far as they agree with the Word of God. Their authority as a rule of faith is not absolute, but relative. What authority they possess is derived from the fact that they are a clear exposition of the Word of God itself. The Word of God is and remains the supreme authority, according to which all teachings and all teachers must be estimated and judged. It is the *norma normans,* while the confessions are the *norma normata.* It is the absolute and final rule of faith. And it is also the ultimate source of all Christian knowledge and truth. No man, no angel, but the Word of God alone, shall establish and formulate articles of faith.

What is the Word of God? To this question we will try to give an answer in the second part of our discussion.

The Word of God comes to us through the preaching of

the Gospel by which saving faith is wrought in the hearts of the believers. We must, therefore, know what the Gospel is before we can know what the Word of God is.

In the New Testament the term "Gospel" has reference to the message of Jesus and the Apostles. It is the proclamation of God's forgiving love and grace to the sinner who repents and believes, and as such it is inseparably bound up with the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the revelation of the living God himself in all his grace and truth. It is the word of the cross, the message of salvation, which is based upon the redemptive work of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. God's living revelation to us, through the saving power of the Gospel, is firmly rooted and safely anchored in the Christ of the Gospel, the Christ who died for our sins and was raised for our justification. There would be no living revelation of God, no Gospel, no Word of God, without the revelation of God in the historical person and work of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer.

But the historical revelation of God in Christ is again inseparably bound up with the Scriptures, the canonical books of the Old and the New Testament, as the records of that revelation. We accept the Scriptures as our final and supreme authority in all matters that pertain to our Christian faith and life, primarily because of the fact that they are the records of that divine revelation which culminates in the historical person and work of Jesus Christ. But since that revelation comes to us through the preaching of the Gospel, by which saving faith is wrought in our hearts, the true understanding of the Gospel is always the key to the true understanding of the Word of God in its relation to the Christ of the Gospel and to the Scriptures that testify of Him.

The Lutheran conception of the Word of God is, therefore, determined first of all by the conception of the Gospel as the proclamation of God's grace and mercy in Christ Jesus, our Lord. As soon as we believe in the Gospel, the meaning of the Word of God will become clear to us: it is that word

by which saving faith is wrought in our hearts, that word which brings the Christ of the Gospel and God himself down to us, so that we may have communion with him. It is only another way to state the same truth when we say that the meaning of the formal principle of Lutheranism is determined by its material principle: the doctrine of justification by faith. That we are justified by faith alone, without any merits and works on our part; that there is no other mediator between God and men except the one mediator, Jesus Christ, who has made atonement for all our sins through the blood of the cross; that the sinner who puts his trust in Christ and accepts the grace of God, offered him in and through the Gospel, with a believing heart, never doubting that God will be true to his promises, may be certain of his eternal salvation; that all true believers are priests and kings before God, have free access to his grace and may freely converse with him as children converse with their father; that all Christian believers are free men, free from guilt and sin, free from the curse of the Law and bound by no other law but the law of love; that the Church is not an external organization, governed and ruled by a hierarchy which claims to have received its power and authority from Christ himself, but the congregation of believers and the communion of saints in the sense of the New Testament writers—all these statements, proclaimed by the confessors of the Church of the Reformation with tongues of fire, are the result of that new conception and interpretation of the Gospel in which they rediscovered the true meaning of the Word of God.

This conception of the Gospel was something entirely new to the people at the time of the Reformation. Its discovery was the result of a religious experience that grew out of the spiritual conflicts and struggles of a soul, burdened and torn by the terrors of a stricken conscience, filled with a deep sense of its own utter helplessness and wretchedness, a soul longing for an answer to the question: How can I get a gracious God? Not as if Luther had lived a life steeped in sin and

shame. On the contrary, the quest for a gracious God had driven him out of the world into the solitude of the monastery to seek for himself that perfect life of holiness which would be in complete harmony with the will and law of the most holy God. He was painfully conscientious in observing all the rules which the Church and his superiors imposed upon him. But all his endeavors were in vain. They did not bring him the peace for which his heart was yearning. The assurance which the Church could give him did not satisfy the demands of his own conscience. Whatever he might do was not sufficient to change the face of an angry and wrathful God into the countenance of a loving Father. In spite of all his good works he still found himself a lost and condemned sinner. His experience with the Law ended in the same hopeless defeat which the Apostle Paul has expressed in the words: "Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24.)

But Luther's struggle with the Law was only one side of his own religious experience. It was the dark side of the picture. And it had as its counterpart another side. This other side has nothing to do with the Law, but is connected with the rediscovery of the true meaning of the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith. To his own great surprise, Luther discovered in the message of Paul the real Christ, who is not a second Moses, not a new lawgiver, but the Redeemer and Savior, and as such the end of the Law. And when he found in the message of Paul, especially in his Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, the true meaning of the Gospel as it had been proclaimed by all the New Testament writers, it came to him as a revelation in the same true and genuine sense that is expressed in the words of the Lord Jesus, Himself, when He said to Peter, in answer to Peter's confession near Cæsarea Philippi: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 16:17). Through the Gospel it had pleased God to reveal his Son in him (cf. Gal. 1:16).

In this new conception of the Gospel and the Christ of the Gospel we find the deeper reason for the emphasis which the Church of the Reformation places upon the *sola fide,* the precious truth that we are justified by faith and by faith alone. It is only another way of proclaiming the all-sufficiency of the redemptive work of Christ for our salvation. We are justified by faith and by faith alone, because there is no other means to lay hold upon Christ and His redemption but by faith. Faith, saving faith, as it is wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit himself, is not one of the good works demanded by the Law. It is simply the organ and instrument through which the merits of Christ are apprehended and appropriated. Luther's *sola fide* is so precious to us because it safeguards the fundamental truth of the Gospel, that Christ and Christ alone is our Redeemer, that our salvation does not depend upon anything that is within us, or upon anything that we can do, but is based solely upon Christ and His redemption. In other words, the *sola fide* is justified and explained by the correlative term *solus Christus.*

But the Christ of the Gospel, who is also the Christ of our faith, is God's own gracious revelation to us. In Christ, God himself comes down to us and reveals himself to us as the God of holiness, but also as the God of love. The work of redemption is Christ's work. But it is also God's own work. For "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" (II Cor. 5:17). The atoning death of Christ is not only the supreme proof of His own love, but also the revelation and manifestation of the love of God himself. In fact, the Gospel itself, the proclamation of God's grace and forgiveness to all who believe, has its last and deepest source in God's own love, his infinite grace and mercy. It reveals to us the plan of salvation as it is rooted in the heart of God himself, founded upon an eternal counsel of his love, which was realized when the fullness of the time had come. Conscious of this eternal counsel of love in Christ the believer may apply to himself the words of the Apostle Paul: "I am persuaded

that neither death nor life . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Rom. 8:39). The *sola fide* leads to the *solus Christus* and the *solus Christus* to the *sola gratia.*

Characteristic of Luther's religious experience and the Lutheran conception of the Gospel as the very heart of the Word of God is, also, the clear and sharp distinction between the Law and the Gospel. This distinction is in harmony with Paul's doctrine of salvation. But it was unknown to the Church before the time of the Reformation. In fact, the conception of the Gospel or the Christian doctrine of salvation as a *nova lex,* a new law, begins to appear in the Church at a very early time, and with very few exceptions it has dominated the teaching and theology of the Church fathers and theologians for many centuries. Luther's own experience had taught him that the Gospel is not a new law, but the very opposite of the Law. The Law is also a part of the Word of God. But the Law convicts of sin; it demands; it threatens; it condemns; it drives into the depths of despair. Christ is the end of the Law, and the Gospel, as the message of salvation and the proclamation of God's grace and forgiveness to all who believe and put their trust in Christ, has nothing to do with the Law. It does not demand, but it promises. It does not condemn, but it justifies and saves. It does not drive into despair, but it leads out of despair into the glorious freedom with which Christ has made us free. It fills the soul of the believer, who is justified by faith and puts his trust in Christ, with joy and peace. It does not demand good works, but it gives a new spirit, and out of this new spirit of love grows a new life in holiness and love.

The clear distinction between the Law and the Gospel is one of the essential features of Lutheran faith and theology. It is also one of the characteristics of true Lutheran preaching and teaching. To divide rightly the Word of God, to distinguish clearly between Law and Gospel, to preach the Law in all its severity and the Gospel in all its sweetness, is one of

the most important tasks laid upon every Lutheran minister who wants to be true to the faith and confession of his Church. And it is perhaps one of the greatest weaknesses of modern preaching that this distinction is no longer felt to be the chief standard by which the true evangelical character of our preaching must be judged. Much of the vagueness and lack of positiveness of modern preaching is due to the fact that the preacher himself is not clear as to the distinct functions of the Law and the Gospel.

The Lutheran conception of the Gospel and its relation to the Law is also the key to the true understanding and valuation of the Scriptures, the Bible, the canonical books of the Old and the New Testament.

When the risen Lord commanded his Apostles to go and make disciples of all the nations, he did not send them with a book under their arms, but with a faith in their hearts and with a message upon their lips. He wanted them to be his witnesses in and to the world. He wanted them to proclaim to others what they had seen with their own eyes and heard with their own ears (cf. I John 1:1-3). For this purpose he had called and chosen them that they should be with him and that he might send them forth to preach (Mark 3:14). For this purpose he had promised to send them the paraclete, the comforter, that he might lead them and guide them into all truth (John 16:13). We find in our Gospels many words of the Master that were addressed especially to them, words that were intended for their own instruction and training as his Apostles and witnesses to the world. Yet, among these words we find none that might be interpreted as a command or even as an encouragement to put down in writing what they had seen and heard. They were called and commissioned to be his Apostles, to continue the work which he had begun while he was still with them, to proclaim the coming of God's Kingdom and to prepare the hearts of the believers for the day of the Lord.

Moreover, the disciples of Jesus and the Christians of the

first generation did not reckon with a long time of waiting, but were daily looking forward with eager expectation to the glorious return of their beloved Lord. With Paul they believed that the present order of things was already passing away (I Cor. 7:31). Therefore, they did not feel the need of giving their followers a new sacred book for their edification, instruction and guidance. More important than the codification of the new faith in a new sacred book was to them the Lord's assurance of his own abiding presence, his glorious return and the help of the Holy Spirit.

Yet the Christians of the first generation were not without a sacred book. They followed the example of the Lord Jesus himself in accepting the sacred Scriptures of the Old Testament as the written word of God. But they also followed his example in giving these sacred Scriptures a new interpretation. In the light of the *magnalia Dei,* the wonderful works of God, which they had witnessed, the Old Testament became to them the great Christ-book, which in all its parts testified of him whom God had sent to his people to fulfill the promises given to the Fathers. This book was sufficient for all their needs. It provided them with all the material which they needed for their arguments with the Jews to prove to them that Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified and risen Lord, was the Christ, the promised Messiah of his own people and the whole world. And in accordance with this conception and interpretation of the Old Testament as the great book of prophecy, the Scripture-proof became an important part of their missionary preaching.

It was only in the second generation, when the original Apostles and eye-witnesses were passing away, that the need was felt to supplement the prophetic testimony of the Scriptures of the Old Testament by the written records of those who had been close to the Lord Jesus himself or had occupied a place of leadership among their fellow Christians.

Even in the Apostolic Church the Old Testament was not the sole authority of the believers. The Apostle Paul, the

oldest literary witness of early Christianity, appeals in his letters quite frequently to a "word of the Lord" in the same manner in which he appeals to the written word of God in the Old Testament. The Lord Jesus himself had not left any written records. But the words which he had spoken were accepted by all his disciples as an absolute authority, and no Christian of the Apostolic Church would have questioned them. One or more collections of such words of the Lord have been incorporated in our Gospels. We do not know who has collected them. Nor do we know who has translated them from the mother tongue of Jesus and his disciples into the language of the New Testament. But it is practically certain that many of them were written down and circulated among the believers of the early Church long before our present Gospels were composed.

Another authority in the Apostolic Church, side by side with the words of the Lord Jesus himself, was the testimony of those who had been called and commissioned by him. The very name "apostle," which was applied to them, indicates that their words were accepted by their fellow Christians as the words of men who had received their authority directly from the Lord Jesus himself. When these leaders of the Apostolic Church had been called to their reward, the written word took the place of the spoken word, and it was only natural that in the course of time the literary documents that were connected with their names should have been looked upon by all the believers with the utmost respect and reverence. In fact, the note of apostolicity became one of the most distinctive marks in the formation of the New Testament Canon.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians the statement is made that all the believers are being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone (Eph. 2:21). Apostles and prophets are mentioned together in other passages of the New Testament as having an important place in the life of the early Church.

Among the charismatic gifts which the Apostle Paul discusses in First Corinthians the gift of prophecy is valued by him more highly than other gifts, because of the fact that true prophecy is the living voice of the Holy Spirit himself. In the Canon of the New Testament we find at least one book that was accepted as canonical, chiefly because it was believed to contain true prophecy. It is the book known to us as the Apocalypse or the Revelation of St. John.

Yet the Holy Spirit is not only the spirit of true prophecy, but also the moving power of the Gospel, the testimony of the Apostles and the words of Jesus himself. Historically speaking, the twenty-seven documents that now constitute the Canon of the New Testament are the product of the early Church. But when they were finally accepted as the supreme authority and the final rule of faith, alongside of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, they were received and accepted as the written word of God, chiefly because of their intimate connection with the historical revelation of God in our Lord, Jesus Christ. The formation of the New Testament Canon is the result of a long and rather complicated historical process, in which many factors have played their part. But looking at them from the standpoint of faith they do not receive their authority from the Church or any Council or Councils of the Church, but rest upon their own authority.

The Church of the Reformation has clearly and unequivocally affirmed and reaffirmed her belief in the supreme authority of the canonical books of the Old and New Testament as the only rule of faith. This belief is essential and fundamental for all her members, especially for all her ministers and teachers. It is also an essential element of Lutheran faith and theology that the interpretation of the Scriptures depends upon themselves, not upon any outside authority: *Scriptura sui interpres.* Yet the Lutheran Church has never officially determined the extent of the Canon. She has always realized the importance of the fact that in the historical development which resulted in the canonization

of the New Testament documents, the historical testimony of the early Church, the *testimonium primitivae ecclesiae,* cannot and must not be ignored. For this reason Luther, for example, has changed in his German New Testament the usual order of the books and has placed at the end those books to which some objection had been made in certain parts of the early Church. The same reason has moved the earlier theologians of the Lutheran Church to distinguish between canonical books of the first and the second class (*libri canonici primi et secundi ordinis*). Later Lutheran theologians have silently dropped this distinction, and it is perhaps true that it has been of little practical importance. But it is nevertheless characteristic of the Lutheran attitude to the Scriptures and the importance which the Lutheran Church attaches to the historical principle in determining their canonical character.

Of far greater significance for the Lutheran attitude to the Scriptures is the conviction that the heart of the Scriptures is the Gospel or—and this means substantially the same thing—the Christ of the Gospel. This Gospel Luther had discovered in the Epistles of Paul. But it gave him the key to the understanding and interpretation of the whole Scripture. And it became for him a new criterion by which he was able, not only to distinguish between the revelation of God in the Old Testament and the New Testament, but also to judge each individual book of the New Testament Canon in its own religious value. The well-known and frequently quoted critical statements of Luther concerning several books of the New Testament Canon, as, for example, the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Epistle of James and the Revelation of John, are neither an expression of liberalism nor are they based upon personal or dogmatic prejudice alone, but they must be understood in the light of his conviction that all the Scriptures testify of him who is the Christ of our faith, and that those writings of the New Testament are of the highest value for us in which the Christ of our faith is proclaimed with the

greatest clearness. For the same reason Luther could declare that the chief books of the New Testament are the Gospel of John, the Epistles of Paul, especially those to the Romans and the Galatians, and the First Epistle of Peter. From the historical point of view we may take exception to such statements on the ground that they are purely subjective and indicate a lack of sound historical judgment. But the application of a new critical principle in determining the religious value of the New Testament writings is of deep significance and of far-reaching importance for the Lutheran attitude to the Scriptures. Lutherans do not regard the Scriptures as a legal code with many paragraphs. They accept the Scriptures and they believe in them primarily, because they believe in Christ.

On the other hand, however, it is just as important and just as true that the Christ of our faith is the Christ of the Scriptures and that our faith in Christ has its objective foundation as well as its ultimate source in the testimony of the Scriptures, first of all, the testimony of the New Testament. What we really mean when we say that we believe in the Scriptures because we believe in Christ is simply this, that in judging the religious value of the Scriptures, Lutherans do not take their place outside of the Scriptures, but in their very heart and center, because to them the whole New Testament is the great Christ-book, just as the Old Testament became the great book of prophecy for the first Christians. From the standpoint of faith it is, therefore, just as correct to say: I believe in Christ because I believe in the Scriptures, as it is correct to say: I believe in the Scriptures because I believe in Christ. If some will object that in making these statements we move in a circle, it cannot be helped. But the circle in which we move is not a *circulus vitiosus.*

The Lutheran conception of the Gospel and the Christ of the Gospel as the heart and center of all the Scriptures will lead us to a true appreciation of the Bible in its relation to the Word of God. *What is the Word of God?* This is the

question which we asked at the beginning. We should now be in a position to give an answer to that question.

The Word of God is undoubtedly connected with those writings which the Church has accepted as the final authority in all matters pertaining to her faith, life and doctrine. But the question that has agitated Lutherans and has been the cause of so much controversy in the past, whether the Bible *is* the Word of God or whether it *contains* the Word of God, does not touch the real nerve of the problem that confronts us. If the question is asked at all, the answer could only be that the Bible contains the Word of God because it is the Word of God, and that it is the Word of God because it contains the Word of God. But in reality we have before us in that question one of those distinctions that try to separate what God has joined together, without solving the real difficulty. The real difficulty concerns the meaning of the term "the Word of God."

Once more we ask: What is the Word of God? We know ourselves to be in agreement with all the New Testament writers when we answer: The Word of God in the most real sense is the Gospel. It is that word by which saving faith is wrought in the heart of the believer. It is God's own living revelation to us, and it is not a communication of certain facts or doctrines but a message that proclaims God's forgiving love to all who repent and believe. In this message God himself comes down to us, not for the purpose only to enlighten our intellects, but for the purpose to draw us to himself, so that we may have fellowship with him and may serve him in holiness and righteousness. Inseparably connected with the preaching of the Gospel is the preaching of the Law as an expression of God's holy will. And it is only when we begin to understand the Gospel that the Law will be revealed to us in its full majesty and power. Law and Gospel are, therefore, the two parts of the Word of God.

The Gospel as the Word of God and the means of God's living revelation to us, however, is based upon the historical

revelation of God in the person and work of our Lord, Jesus Christ. It is the unanimous conviction of all the New Testament writers that God himself has come down to us in Christ and that his revelation in Christ is final and absolute. "God having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son" (Hebr. 1:1 f.). "When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son" (Gal. 4:4). "The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). This conviction of the New Testament writers goes, ultimately and in the last analysis, back to the Lord Jesus himself. "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21). "I came not to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17). "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see" (Luke 10:23). "All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father, and no one knoweth the Son save the Father, neither doth any know the Father save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him" (Matt. 11:27).

Of this historical revelation of God in our Lord, Jesus Christ, the twenty-seven documents that constitute the New Testament Canon are the records. Without the testimony of these records the revelation of God in Christ would be entirely unknown to us. There would be no way for us to approach it. Through the testimony of the New Testament witnesses, with which the prophetic testimony of the Scriptures of the Old Testament is indissolubly connected, God's revelation in Christ is made accessible to all. The preaching of the Gospel is not confined to the books of the Bible. Ordinarily, the Gospel comes to us in the message of the Church, through the preaching and teaching of those to whom the office of the ministry has been committed. But the Church's message is only an echo of the Gospel as it has been transmitted to us in the testimony of the New Testament witnesses. And only in so far as the Church's message is really an echo of the testimony of the Scripture can it claim

to be the Word of God. This is the true meaning of the demand upon which the Lutheran Church has always laid such emphasis, that the Gospel must be preached in its purity. Without the testimony of the Scripture we would have no assurance that the Gospel would remain with us. Without it we would have no Gospel at all.

In the relation of the Gospel to the testimony of the Scripture lies the solution of the problem: How can God's historical revelation in the past become God's living revelation to us in the present? Essential to the idea of revelation is the note of universality. Yet God's revelation in Christ is one in history, and as such it is limited by space and time. This problem is solved for us as soon as we conceive of the New Testament writings as the records of God's historical revelation and also as the means or channels through which that revelation is made accessible to us, the means through which the living God himself conveys and transmits to us his grace. Born out of the Spirit of God these writings bring into our hearts the same Spirit who is the source of all spiritual life.

The New Testament writings are the records of God's historical revelation in Christ. The New Testament writings are also the vehicles of God's living revelation to us. The connecting link between the two is the word, and the word is never without the Spirit, as the Spirit is never without the word. The word is based upon the fact. But it also explains and interprets the fact. The interpretation of the facts that constitute the divine revelation in the historical person and work of Jesus Christ is therefore not left to the individual, nor is it a prerogative of the Church. It is contained in the same writings which are both the records of God's historical revelation and the means of his living revelation. The Holy Spirit who has given us these writings is also their interpreter. To say less about them would not satisfy the demands of our faith. To go beyond these statements is neither in the interest of faith nor does it agree with the historical facts

and the actual conditions by which the documents of the Bible are surrounded.

To ascertain those facts and conditions is the aim of biblical scholarship. Its field is immense, and there are in this field many places that are still unexplored. But great progress has been made during the nineteenth century, due to the combined efforts of many scholars in Europe and America. To-day we know more about the literary and historical character of the biblical documents, and the conditions out of which they arose, than our fathers did. To build a Chinese wall around the books of the Bible, in the hope that those efforts might be stopped, is the unwisest thing that could be done and the most shortsighted policy that could be followed. The question whether the Bible should be made the object of literary, critical and historical investigation is no longer a debatable question. It is true that negative criticism has done its worst to destroy the belief of many simple Christians in the trustworthiness of the biblical records. Yet criticism itself is not a belief but a method. And to apply to the biblical documents the same scientific methods that are used in other fields of human knowledge to ascertain the facts is not only the right but the duty of every Christian theologian. In doing his duty courageously and fearlessly, in the spirit of reverence and with no other object than to ascertain the facts and to find the truth, he need not have any fear that the results of his investigation will ever conflict with the interests of his faith. Least of all need the Lutheran scholar and theologian have such fear. For the spirit of Lutheranism is the spirit of the Gospel itself, transplanted into the hearts and lives of all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Where this spirit is, there is freedom—the same freedom that is expressed in the words of the Apostle Paul: "All things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (I Cor. 3:21-23)—the same freedom which Luther had in mind when he wrote: *Domini sumus, et in nominativo et in genitivo.*

WHAT IS LUTHERANISM?

IV

ABDEL ROSS WENTZ

["Dr. Wentz's reputation as a careful and discriminating historical scholar and teacher is well established and needs no special commendation," wrote the venerable Henry Eyster Jacobs in the Introduction to that widely circulated volume *The Lutheran Church in American History,* published in 1923. With these brief but commendatory words from Lutheran America's most distinguished historical scholar the mantle of historian of the Lutheran Church in America passed to younger but worthy shoulders. Few books in recent years have made the Lutheran Church in America better known to the general reader than this volume by the Gettysburg historian. Even Lutherans have become better acquainted with themselves and each other, through the story told in those fascinating pages. Professor Wentz is thoroughly at home in American Lutheran history.

His has been an academic career of ascending distinction. Born at Black Rock, York County, Pennsylvania, on October 8, 1883, Professor Wentz has grown up in the very shadows of two of Lutheran America's oldest institutions of learning. Gettysburg has hallowed and significant traditions. Its college dates back to 1832, while its seminary has already reached and passed the century mark. From here has radiated whatever liberal type of thought has characterized Lutheranism in America in past decades. Professor Wentz's name is interlocked with Gettysburg: with its College, A.B., 1904, M.A., 1907, professor of history, 1909-1916, honorary Doctor of Divinity, 1921; with its Seminary, B.D., 1907, professor of Church history since 1916, and author of its official *Centennial History,* published in 1926. He has been, moreover, for many years curator of the library of the Lutheran Historical Society, located at the Seminary.

He prepared for his Doctor of Philosophy degree first, with three years of study in Germany: Leipzig, 1907-1908; Tübingen, 1908-1909; Berlin, 1909-1910; and later, for three years, at George Washington University, where the degree was awarded in 1914. Noteworthy historical studies, other than those mentioned, have been

published under his name: *German Element in York County, Pennsylvania,* 1916; *History of the Maryland Synod,* 1920; *When Two Worlds Met,* 1921; article in Volume III of *Outline of Christianity,* 1926; *Lutheran World Almanac and Encyclopedia, 1927-1928;* co-author of *The Lutheran Churches of the World,* 1929. For years he has been a regular contributor to the *Lutheran Quarterly.*

In 1909 the Synod of Maryland ordained him as minister of the gospel. He has served the Lutheran Church with marked distinction in high councils. Since 1924 he has been a member of the executive board of the United Lutheran Church and for six years a member of its Board of Publications. He has represented this large and influential body as delegate to two Lutheran World conventions, first at Eisenach, in 1923, and at Copenhagen, in 1929, at which conference he served as English secretary.—*The Editor.*]

Lutheranism is not the name of a Church organization. It is not the name of a form of worship. It is not even the name of a type of piety. It is primarily the name of a body of faith. Its crowning attribute is not in the sphere of polity or liturgy or ethics, but in the sphere of religion and theology.

The name itself is of little consequence. It has gathered connotations in the course of its four hundred years of history, and these connotations may be an object of pride or of humiliation to the Lutheran of to-day. But in itself the name is unimportant. The thing may exist under many names. In fact, the name Lutheranism is unfortunate. Martin Luther would have been the first to deny that the religious movement of his day was the original product of his own mind and heart. He would have been the last to consent that this revival of primitive Christianity, as he regarded it, this restoration of Pauline faith, should be known by his own name or by any other personal or national denomination. The use of Luther's name to designate a Church is certainly not so unfortunate as the names of a number of other large church bodies. But even so it is unfortunate and even mischievous, for it has led to a number of mistaken ideas about the thing that it is intended to denominate.

There are at least two serious misconceptions as to the

import of Lutheranism. Both of them are widespread. One is the idea that Luther's movement was merely a revolt against the immediate past, a throwing off of a mountain load of errors and practices in the official ecclesiastical apparatus of salvation, a mere turning back of the course of history for a thousand years to the Scriptural foundations of the primitive Church.

The other misconception is that Lutheranism is simply one form of Protestantism and differs from the Protestantism of the Reformed Churches largely because of national, psychological and personal differences between the German Reformers, Luther and Melanchthon, and the Reformers of other lands.

Both of these misconceptions lead to serious consequences. The first makes of Lutheranism something negative and reactionary, and obscures the fact that it is really something positive and progressive. The second makes of Lutheranism something sectarian and nationalistic, and obscures the fact that it is really something catholic and universal.

In these days when there is so much confidence in the future and such an inexorable demand for progress, it cannot be emphasized too strongly that Lutheranism is a forward-looking something, youthful in spirit, and determined to move along the lines of the best advances in times past. In these days of serious search for organizational forms that may afford proper institutional expression for modern Christianity, it cannot be stated too firmly that the chief concern of Lutherans is not for the Lutheran Church as such, but for Lutheranism itself, which is the evangelical and apostolic conception of Christianity.

A Lutheran Church in our day may be a single congregation or a synod or a great national ecclesiastical body, in which Christianity is taught and propagated according to the Lutheran confessions as understood in our day. But Lutheranism itself is not the name of an organization, nor was it born in the sixteenth century when the Lutheran creeds were

fashioned, for it embraces the ecumenical creeds of the ancient Church. Lutheranism is a way of understanding Christianity, a body of faith. It is not guaranteed by the superscription of the name Lutheran, nor is it limited to the visible totality of those who are called Lutheran. The sectarian implications of the name must not be allowed to mislead us: millions of souls who lived long before Martin Luther was born were really Lutheran Christians and adherents of Lutheranism, and many in our day belong in reality to that same household, though they bear another name.

If we are to understand what Lutheranism really is, we must not only look *at* Luther but *through* Luther and *beyond* Luther. We must take into our purview the entire scope of Christian history. The essence of Lutheranism did not enter history for the first time in the age of the German Reformation. It is the product of the course of events of all time, and itself has undergone development during the four hundred years that have elapsed since Luther's day. It is one of the silver cords that stretch from peak to peak across the landscape of Church history. From age to age it is upheld and furthered by the towering personalities that dot the landscape like mountain peaks, of whom Martin Luther was only one, although the chief.

The movement in which the Lutheran Church took its rise was in direct line with the best development of all preceding Christianity. That movement is generally known by such negative terms as "Protestant" and "Reformation." The designation is unhappy, because the Lutheran Reformation was a very positive and forward-looking movement. And not only did it point the way forward but it stood in organic and logical relation with the purest Church tradition of the past. Because the official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church had so long obscured the evangelical elements in Christianity, the teachings of the sixteenth century Reformers broke on the minds of men with the force of a revelation and wrought on the old corrupt Church with the impact of a

revolution. But, as a matter of fact, the essence of those teachings was not new. True, they were oriented and integrated in a new way, but fundamentally they constituted no "new commandment" and no breach of continuity with the genuine Church of all ages. The Protestant Reformation was not a revolt.

When the Roman Catholics gathered at the Council of Trent to repair the breaches made by the Reformation, they leveled their heaviest artillery against the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith alone. In this they showed themselves to be good theologians, for that doctrine was indeed the heart of the Protestant movement. But when they spoke of it as an "unheard-of doctrine," they showed themselves to be poor students of history. Right strenuously Luther insisted that his teaching was the teaching of the Holy Spirit, given repeatedly through other men and through the whole Christian Church.

> I beg not to have my name mentioned, and to call people, not Lutheran, but Christian. What is Luther? The teaching is not mine, nor have I been crucified for any one. . . . I am not, and I do not want to be, anybody's master. In common with the congregation of Christ's people, I hold the one common doctrine of Christ, who alone is our Master.

And it is one of the merits of Ritschl's *History of the Doctrine of Justification* that he brings out this fact so prominently and vindicates Luther so completely against the charge of novelty and schism.

But it must not be supposed that the Lutheran movement of the sixteenth century merely served itself heir to preceding generations and left Christian thought where it had always been. Lutheranism did not put a stop to the continuity of the theological process that had been taking place down through the Christian centuries. On the contrary, it furthered that process. It dissolved the entire theological system in the

alembic of a new experience and handed it down to the next generation, extended and enlarged, refined and vitalized, more thoroughly integrated part with part, and illumined with new light from the divine Word.

When Luther came to his transforming experience much water had passed over the theological mill since the first century of the Christian era. And the doctrinal developments of Luther's day can only be understood when viewed as the logical culmination of fifteen centuries of theological progress. During the first century of Christian history the great body of Christian truth was held largely, as it were, in the immediacy of faith. Not until the end of apostolic days did the effort to theologize begin. In the second century the conflict with paganism and gnosticism led the Church to start the thinking process and lay down the broad fundamental truths that underlie all spiritual religion: the unity and spirituality of God, human freedom, the need of repentance, the fact of divine revelation, the canon of Scripture, the historicity of the Christian facts, and so forth.

During the third and fourth centuries the next step was taken and the doctrine of God, especially the doctrine of the Trinity, was set forth and articulated. In the Monarchian controversies the general doctrine of a personal and immanent Trinity was vindicated. In the Arian controversy the true and essential deity of the Son was upheld. In the Macedonian controversy the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit were established in the thought of the Church.

Advancing another step in the logical process, the Church developed its doctrine of man. This took place in the anthropological controversies in the beginning of the fifth century. As the center of theological interest shifted from God to man, the center of theological activity changed from the speculative East to the practical West. The intensely real problems of sin and grace received their most intensive study and their precise formulation in the Latin Church, particularly through the great mind of Augustine.

After the doctrine of God and the doctrine of man comes the doctrine of Christ. Such is the logical order and such was the chronological order of the theological progress. After the death of Augustine the Church entered upon that long series of bitter controversies known as the Christological. From this long period of theological ferment the line of development emerges at last near the end of the seventh century, with a reaffirmation of the decision of Chalcedon, full humanity and full divinity in the one Person of our Lord. This was the end of the doctrinal development in the ancient Church.

During the Middle Ages the progress of theology was much slower than at any other time. The blanching shadows of legalism and the deadening pall of priestcraft made their baleful influence felt. But even so, some progress was made. Theology proper, anthropology and Christology had each had its day. The next in the order of logical progress would be soteriology, the work of Christ for human redemption. Now the atonement had always been prominent in the faith of Christians, but it had never been brought into the forefront of theological interest and philosophically articulated with other Christian ideas. It was Anselm, in the eleventh century, who made the first systematic attempt at a theological grounding of Christ's saving work. Other minds labored at it. The antitheses were set up. And soon the doctrine of the vicarious atonement reached the essential form in which it has entered into the chief evangelical creeds.

Such was the doctrinal development before the period of the Lutheran Reformation. The Reformers took their stand in line with this organic development and carried the theological process several stages further. After the development of the doctrine of the atonement and the doctrines of objective soteriology, the next logical step in doctrinal formulation of the Christian faith would be the doctrines of subjective soteriology, the doctrines that center about the application of redemption. Now the pivotal fact in the application of

redemption is just the fact of justification by grace, through faith in Christ alone. To have brought this doctrine forward from the immediacy of Christian faith into the forum of theological discussion, and to have related it to all the rest of Christian truth, was Luther's chief contribution to the one increasing purpose that runs through all the ages of theological thought.

The theological development of the sixteenth century, the doctrine of justification by faith and the doctrines of the Word and sacraments that grew out of it, could not have come until the preceding developments and formulations had taken place, those of theology proper, of anthropology, of Christology, and of soteriology. But in the light of the historical perspective it is easy to see that after the doctrinal conclusions of the first fifteen centuries had been reached, the great living issues of the sixteenth century, justification, regeneration, sanctification, were the logical and legitimate outcome. All the lines of history seemed to converge upon that century to make it the special "epoch" for subjective soteriology. Theologically, therefore, Luther's movement was in no sense a revolt against the past. It was not a rupture with the doctrinal development that had taken place up to that time. On the contrary, it stood in direct continuity with the best thought of all preceding ages and with deepest and most vital elements in the piety of the past. It was a necessity of theological sequence.

The thought and practice of the Middle Ages oscillated about two poles. One was the flamboyant external legalism and semi-pelagianism of the official Church, in which the grace of God disappeared under a vast ecclesiastical mechanism of salvation by good works. The other was the quiet and deep piety, often obscure, of saintly souls who felt the utter insufficiency of their own works, and for their comfort and satisfaction went back to the grace of God in Christ Jesus. The Lutheran Reformation was the triumph of the latter over the former. It was the expression, in terms of that day,

of something that had been continuous since apostolic times.

So it is evident that neither in the body of faith that it teaches, nor in the type of piety that it cultivates, is Lutheranism merely a backward leap from the sixteenth century, across the supposed sterility of the "Dark Ages," to the purity of the primitive Christian age. Building upon the only foundation that can be laid for Christian faith and advancing along the lines of the best development in all past ages, Lutheranism sets its face constructively toward the future. It does not stand primarily for "Protest" or "Reform," but for affirmation and construction. It did not enter history for the first time in the sixteenth century nor did it become obsolete when that century had passed. The heart of it is always youthful and has new application to each new day.

The theology of Lutheranism, therefore, is not fixed. There could be no more striking proof of the progressive character of Lutheran theology than the fact that its central doctrine, justification by faith alone, fits so precisely into the logical development of doctrine through the Christian ages. This the Reformers themselves claimed. They would have been the first to deny that the creative ages of Christian thought ended with themselves. And scarcely a generation has passed since the days of the Reformers that has not richly fructified our theological literature and contributed to a progressive understanding of the Gospel. The great Lutheran theologians of four centuries past, always conservative in their approach, nevertheless have never failed to express the Lutheran understanding of the Gospel in "modern" terms, that is, in the thought-patterns of their day, with due critical regard for the philosophical systems that held sway in each case and with an eye to current lines of research. True Lutheranism does not hold that the theological process was closed in the sixteenth century. From time to time since that day new frontier fortresses have been occupied and new lines laid down for further theological advance.

Lutheranism is a progressive historic movement, bearing

always one heart and one identity, but always youthful and always in the process of making its body. And any of the present-day followers of the Reformers who would advocate a reactionary attitude in theology or hold a brief for mental stagnation or intellectual isolation, as essential to Lutheranism, would be utterly without warrant in the works of the Reformers or in the history of Christian thought as a whole. Lutheranism is not negative but positive. It is not reactionary but progressive. Its better name is Evangelical.

Another characteristic of essential Lutheranism is its universal appeal. The assumption is sometimes made that, because Luther was such a thoroughgoing German and because the Lutheran Church arose on the soil of monarchical Germany, therefore, Lutheranism bears the indelible impress of the German race and outside of Germany is always stunted in its normal growth and undergoes, with the change of language and nationality, an essential transformation. This is a mistaken assumption, and it leads to the mistaken conclusion that the Lutheran Church is sectarian in its nature and attitude. Lutheranism in its essence is something more than the personal opinions of the Reformers, Luther and Melanchthon. On certain points it is something entirely different from their personal opinions. At heart it is ecumenical and catholic, as ecumenical and unsectarian as Christianity itself. As a matter of fact, it makes its way across national and linguistic boundaries without suffering abridgment in any essential particular.

There are many formulas for classifying the ways of salvation. One simple formula is to distinguish three groups: the ways without God, the ways from man to God, and the way from God to man. The last is the Lutheran way. Of the first group there are as many ways as there are individuals who try to go through the world without God. Of the second group there are as many ways as there are types of men. Of the third group there is only one way, because there is only one God. Since the Lutheran understanding of

the Gospel takes its beginning in the gracious will of God, it is as ecumenical in its application as the Christian idea of God. It is adapted to all nationalities and to people of widely different psychologies. No race or nation can monopolize it or exhaust its treasures. As a matter of actual history Lutheranism has made its way from nation to nation, more than a score of them, entering into special relationship with each distinctive people and arousing and satisfying the deepest needs that slumber in the soul of that people. In these various relationships and these varied appeals, Lutheranism unfolds the rich diversity of its content, refutes the charge of nationalism and sectarianism, and establishes its claim to catholicity.

In thinking about that great religious movement of the sixteenth century in which Lutheranism received historical embodiment, we must distinguish between those elements that are fundamental and those that are only incidental. The Lutheran Reformation was not the work of a man nor the work of a nation. It was more than that. It was the working out of certain great principles. The times were ripe for the birth of those principles, but they had to be experienced in the soul of some forceful personality before they could become dynamic for subsequent ages. The chosen instrument for that mission was Martin Luther. He felt deeply himself, and he wrought upon the very sources of human feelings in others. Thus it came about that the Reformation, as it actually took place, was the expression of the inner experience of that one man. In the rugged soul of the Augustinian monk was fought out the battle between the two eras. Writers of modern fiction have loved to depict great emotional crises in the lives of their imaginary heroes. But in this matter, history is stranger than fiction. Luther in the birth-throes of the Reformation passed through a veritable tempest in the heart, a genuine crisis of the soul that surpassed anything that fiction can conjure up. The result of that experience was the unshakable conviction in Luther's heart

that a man is adjusted to the divine requirements alone by his personal trust in Jesus Christ as his Savior. This conviction became the very soul of Lutheranism.

Now, in that deep religious experience through which Luther gave birth to the material principle of the Reformation, it was not the German in him, it was the human in him that received expression. In his devout struggle after a sense of peace with God he had gone down to those profound depths where incidentals and particulars are forgotten and where one is on a level with the very elements of human nature. His prophetic genius touched the very heart-strings of human interest and human passion and struck a theme of universal appeal. In his search after a merciful God and the assurance of forgiven sin he rose far above all circumstance of time and place. That is why his experience can be universally valid wherever human consciences can be awakened to a sense of sin. The way of salvation that begins with God and comes from above is an ecumenical way. It is not dependent in its essence upon human circumstances, such as race or nation, or human devices, such as organization or name.

This will be clear if we pause to consider that there have been three main types of Christianity in the course of Christian history. First, there is the Greek type. The first people outside of Palestine to come under the influence of Christianity were the Greeks. Their theologians, following the lead of Irenæus as to redemption, placed in the center of their thought the great contrast between death and life. This is a genuinely Greek conception. Union with God is life; separation from him is death. As Christ leads men to see God, he brings life. For, as those who see the light stand in the light and receive its luster, so those who see God are in God and receive his glory. This divine splendor is eternal life, and this eternal life through Christ stands in sharp contrast to the hopeless death that overtakes everything else in the world. These are tones that have their

foundations in the Gospel of Jesus, but they are played on Greek instruments and thereby receive their coloring.

Second, there is the Latin type of Christianity. Among the Romans the Greek longing for life was not lost, but it retired to a secondary place and became, as it were, an undertone. Among the Latin theologians, following the lead of Tertullian, the scene of divine activity in the process of redemption is shifted from the world at large to the individual human soul. The center of thought concerning redemption is no longer the contrast between death and life, but that between sin and righteousness. Something must be done to purge a man of sin and make him actually righteous. The human soul, which is "by nature Christian," longs for relief from sin, for renewing; and redemption is the divine act of purging a man of sin and infusing righteousness into him. This thought also has its roots in the Gospel, but it is the expression of the Latin mind. For that reason this conception of redemption lived on and still lives on in Roman Catholicism, the Christianity of the Romance peoples, who are the heirs of the ancient Latins.

Third, there is the Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic, the Protestant type of Christianity. If it be asked what special conception of redemption is held by the Anglo-Saxons and Teutons, the answer is to be found in the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Here, again, it must be said that the net gains of ancient times are not ignored. The Reformation was not an effort to establish a new interpretation of Christianity or to fashion a new type of Christian thought, but simply to move forward upon the best results of previous history, to rise above the potency of Roman forms and the intellectual charm of Greek speculations and gather the original essence of Christianity about a new center, namely, the gracious will of God as revealed in Christ. With unswerving consistency Luther hammered into pieces the Roman conception of merit and with inexorable logic he pointed out that all human righteousness is incomplete and that even the divine renewing

of man is incomplete in this life. The hope of salvation can never rest on anything that man is or may become. Man needs God and the way of salvation begins above. And so Luther built up his entire system about the gracious will of God, who is greater than our heart, in that he forgives us our sins through the merit of Christ. Our entire being, present and future, rests solely on the merciful will of God. This is the very heart of Lutheranism and from the nature of the case it lifts itself above such human limitations as inhibit the Greek and the Roman conceptions of the Gospel.

It is true that the Lutheran movement of the sixteenth century was swept to success on a wave of nationalism. But that is only incidental. On close analysis it will be observed that the essence of Lutheranism, Luther's understanding of the process of redemption, unlike the Greek and Latin understanding, goes to the very heart of human nature. This is because it issues from the very heart of the Gospel. The Greek, in his conception of Christianity, may have had a deeper appreciation for the harmony and restful beauty of intellectual depth. The Roman, in his conception, may have had more regard for the order and restraint of fine organization. But those things vary with racial characteristics. In Lutheranism, though it is the generic form of Teutonic and Anglo-Saxon Christianity, we have the mysticism, the subjectivism, the personal self-expression, the idealism that transcends all laws and all bounds. Greece may be more classic and æsthetic; Romanism may be more logical and consistent; but Lutheranism is more human. In Lutheranism we have the most complete expression of the subjective side of the process of salvation, the most complete regard for personality, the most thorough appreciation of man as man.

Lutheranism is not based upon a creed or a group of creeds, else it might become obsolete with the changes of human language or the progress of human knowledge. It is not based upon a code or a system of ethics, else it might prove antiquated with the change of practical conditions and the

rise of new problems. It is not based upon a name or a form of organization, else it might pass away with the changes of history. Lutheranism is based upon a person, the unchanging Person of Christ. All the emphasis in the entire system of thought is gathered about the divine-human Person of Christ, who is the object of worship. At the same time its principles of polity and liturgy assure the most complete regard for the personality of the worshiper.

It was no accident that the epoch-making book on *Christian Liberty,* that splendid pæan to personality, came from the pen of the founder of Lutheranism. Neither was it an accident that the doctrine of the general priesthood of believers originated in Lutheranism. Both of these ideas have entailed effects that have reached far beyond the bounds of Germany and the limits of the sixteenth century and have profoundly influenced the most varied forms of human activity. The former restored man to his God-given dignity. The latter emancipated the Christian faith from the strangling limitations of mediating priesthood, of language and form, of times and places, and ultimately led men forth to cross the seas and tramp the continents, building new nations and cultivating new enterprises.

It is this very emphasis upon the principle of personalism, the infinite value of the human soul, that lies at the basis of the ecumenical character of Christianity itself. Hence, Lutheranism, although it was born on the genial soil of the deep German soul, nevertheless seems to reach the very heart of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the core of the theology of the Apostle Paul, and this was the only hope and claim of its founders. For this reason Lutheranism can never be the exclusive possession of any particular race or nation, but can be applied wherever there are human souls capable of worshiping God. Neither can it be embodied in any sect or party or division of Christendom or have its primary interest in such incidentals as organizational form or political equality or economic freedom. The simplicity of its essence, the

deep inwardness of its nature, the essential humanity and complete divinity of its system, the great variety of its expression in history, all attest its ecumenical appeal and its universal character. More than any other Church in the world it might claim the title Catholic or Universal. It is, indeed, the Evangelical Catholic Church, the Church of the universal gospel.

From these considerations we may draw certain conclusions as to the proper attitude and distinctive mission of Lutheranism in modern times. As we have seen, Lutheranism points forward in theology. The Lutheran Reformation did not create a new theology essentially different from that of the ancient creeds. But it did put new life and richer meaning into the old articles of faith. It did this, not so much by purging away dead legalism and ecclesiasticism, but rather by relating all of the old articles to a vital experience of Christ as Savior and by advancing the theological process several stages.

Just as the sixteenth-century doctrine of justification by faith alone could not have been articulated until the preceding steps in the history of doctrine had been taken, so the elaboration of that doctrine cast its light backwards across history and revivified all the doctrinal development that had preceded. The Person of Christ becomes central in the entire system of Christian thought and that fact rejuvenates and transforms all other subjects. It is the obverse of justification by faith, the idea that the believer is adjusted to the divine requirements solely by his personal trust in Christ. Not by arguments of reason or the achievements of human knowledge, not by moral virtue or attainments of character, not by orthodox belief or correct liturgical practice, not by adherence to a code of conduct or membership in an institution, but solely by a deep inward personal experience of the living and divine Christ is the believer brought into saving relationship with God and freed from the guilt and power of sin.

The statement of this central truth and its fructification of

the entire system of Christian faith did not, however, put an end to the theologizing process. Already, in Luther's day, several additional steps were taken. After his experience of salvation through faith in Christ alone, Luther proceeded, step by step, away from the authority of the Church toward a new authority in religion. That new authority he finally found in the Bible, divested of traditional accretions and interpreted in the immediacy of faith. Lutheranism, accordingly, has always found its highest religious authority in the Bible. That was a step forward in the doctrinal development of the Christian Church. The doctrine of the Word, carefully grounded and thoroughly integrated with the other great doctrines, has proved one of the distinct contributions of Lutheranism.

It is part of the essence of Lutheranism to teach that man cannot by the utmost reach of human investigation find out God, and that God has not left it to the natural aspirations of the human heart to find him. He has not left it to the natural progress of human knowledge and human reason to find how to live. He has made known the truth by which men should be saved and by which they should live. He has revealed himself through supernatural actions and through special witnesses whom he has sent. This revelation of God is on record for us in the Bible. Because the Bible tells us the thoughts of God toward men, it is called the Word of God. Because it was prepared under a special direction of God, so as to make its message dynamic for all ages, it is called the inspired Word of God. That Word is Christ, and because the Holy Scriptures are the record of God's revelation of himself in Christ, they are our sole and supreme authority in matters of religion and enable us to experience Christ in our own lives.

Our interpretation of God's revelation of himself, as recorded in the Bible, grows from more to more with the onward sweep of the tides of human knowledge. Lutheranism teaches that the Christian Church only gradually and

progressively comes to a complete understanding of the fullness of truth as it is in Christ Jesus. At various times the Christian Church has adopted formal statements in regard to vital points in the Christian faith. In the early centuries the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed came into use. Lutherans accept these early statements of faith and thus place themselves in communion with the saints of the primitive church. But new crises call for additional and more particular statements. The Reformation movement of the sixteenth century brought deeper insight into all the cardinal truths of Christianity. When occasion arose the Lutherans proceeded to set forth this more complete understanding of the Scriptures in a statement called the Augsburg Confession. Lutheranism regards this as its distinctive creed and it is the generic confession of Protestant Christianity.

This statement of the distinctive beliefs of Lutheranism as it was understood in 1530, together with other statements that were formulated later, do not constitute a complete system of theology. Much theological work remained for subsequent generations of Lutherans. Much still remains. Though the essential faith of Lutheranism is fixed, and can only be said to enlarge with time, yet the theology of Lutheranism is in no sense fixed or static.

When, therefore, the Lutheran of to-day accepts these Lutheran confessions he does not feel that they are a fetter binding him to antiquated ways of thinking. He looks at them in the light of their history. He realizes that they are documents which were composed to meet certain definite conditions. He believes that if the same issues were to recur in the same intellectual environment the same statements would need to be made. By the same token he believes that new issues in a new intellectual environment may call for new or additional statements, though he would insist that these new or additional statements be in harmony with the generic creeds. He feels that these Lutheran confessions are the only

valid means to perpetuate the Christ-centered interpretation of the Gospel and, therefore, to perpetuate the Lutheran Church. It would not be correct to say that "the declarations set down in the sixteenth century are a part of essential Lutheranism"; it would be more nearly correct to say that those declarations have hitherto been the means of preserving and propagating essential Lutheranism.

The Lutheran of to-day rejoices in the enlarging interpretation of the Lutheran position, in the prophetic creativeness of the distinctive Lutheran teachings, in the progressive element in Lutheran theology on the basis of our confessional heritage, and in the great flood of light that streams from recent scientific advances and from recent religious thought to justify the essential elements in the Lutheran interpretation of the eternal verities. He welcomes new light from whatever source.

There is another count in the progressive character of Lutheran theology. It is a result of the central position that essential Lutheranism accords to the message of salvation and life through Christ. It admits the use of scientific methods in the study of Bible history and literature. Lutherans insist upon the absolute reliability of the revelation recorded in the Bible. They emphasize the supernatural character of that revelation and will not tolerate any treatment of the Bible that would explain its contents as merely natural products of human thought and history. But questions, for example, concerning the date and authorship of biblical books, and other questions that do not involve the meaning of the Christian gospel or the purely religious content of the biblical message, they are willing to let the scholars decide upon the basis of historical evidence and other scientific method. The Church and its consistent theologians do not presume to prescribe what conclusions science must reach. Lutheranism holds that there must be perfect harmony between the Word of God, rightly understood, and the established facts of science as derived from the study of the physical universe. If differences arise between the inferences of

the Christian gospel and the inferences of science, patient study must, in time, resolve the differences by making corrections on one side or the other or on both sides. The laws of nature are God's mode of operating in the physical world, and the modern sciences may make definite and positive contributions to our understanding and interpretation of the Scriptures.

There are several chapters in Christian theology that are in dire need of rewriting to-day. Such are, for example, the chapter on the Church and the Ministry, particularly as it relates to the State and to the various other aspects of Society; the chapter on the New Life, in its multitudinous implications for modern times; and the chapter on Eschatology, for whose rewriting the twentieth century is providing particularly favorable conditions. On these and other subjects the theology of essential Lutheranism, true to its genius, will make advance. But it will advance on lines prolonged from the doctrinal process of all Christian history. The Lutheran theologian, in making his theological progress, will repudiate neither the physical sciences as such nor historical method nor any other of the scholarly disciplines. Neither will he regard the Bible as a textbook on any subject, except the special revelation of God in Christ Jesus. He will welcome from any source aid to a more complete understanding of the truth as it is in Christ.

Essential Lutheranism, therefore, is neither fundamentalist nor liberalist, as those words are used to-day, but progressively evangelical. Its spirit does not rhyme with the literalism of the fundamentalist, which makes the Bible a book of oracles, a textbook with explicit marching orders for the "warfare between science and religion." It is foreign to the pessimism of the fundamentalist, which makes of all life a series of contradictions practically insoluble and looks for constant social deterioration ending in a great cataclysm. Neither does the spirit of genuine Lutheranism rhyme with the naturalism of the liberalist, which makes of the Bible a

merely human product, not entirely trustworthy, not the norm of truth but a part of the literary sources from which to extract it. It is foreign to the humanitarianism of the liberalist as the measure of all religious value, which sees in social regeneration and sanctified human relationships the heart and the whole of Christianity. Lutherans can never be satisfied with a one-sided emphasis upon the transcendence of God nor with a one-sided emphasis upon the immanence of God. In theory and in practice they maintain a proper balance between the two. This is the road to consistent and permanent theological progress. And this, too, is a result of the centrality in Lutheran thought of the Person of Christ, who is the God-Man.

From what has been said it follows that Lutherans are chiefly concerned about the religious message of the Bible rather than its ethical teachings. They hold that the first and chief business of the Church is purely religious, not social, nor political, nor even moral, and that the Church as an institution has no moral right to engage in political affairs, such as the enactment or enforcement of law or the application of force. The business of the Church is to bear witness to the truth of the Gospel, that faith in God through Jesus Christ, which saves men and thereby transforms life. They believe that right Christian conduct will inevitably flow from a genuine saving faith, and for that reason they lay only secondary emphasis on moral activism, benevolence programs, the social gospel, and so forth. They hold that the dynamic of social reconstruction, like the way of salvation itself, must come from above and begin its work within. The Lutheran pastor as a rule, therefore, is more concerned to cultivate deep inner piety within the souls committed to his charge than to sparkle in the pulpit, attract publicity, and be known as a "great preacher." In any census of popularity among American preachers in general, Lutherans may point with pride to the fact that none of their number is ever stigmatized in that way.

But this primary interest of Lutheranism in religious rather than ethical values must not be understood to mean abject indifference as to the course of secular culture. Not necessarily. It has doubtless been one of the weaknesses in the practice of the Lutheran Church, hitherto, that it has concerned itself so little about the progressive conquest of secular culture and made so little conscious effort to bridge the chasm that yawns between Christianity and general civilization. This is not due to the essential genius of Lutheranism. It is due to a number of historical factors, perhaps primarily to a one-sided emphasis in the Lutheran Reformation itself.

The Reformation placed its main emphasis on human rights without a corresponding emphasis on human duties. This weakness is easy to understand, in view of the circumstances from which that movement arose. In their effort to bring evangelical ideas into expression in spite of the official Church, in their struggle to provide free flow for the current of evangelical piety that had so long been compelled to run underground, the Reformers were obliged to lay their emphasis on the spiritual freedom of every individual man under Christ. In their high enthusiasm for spiritual emancipation they left other elements in comparative neglect. It would be too much to expect that the splendid implications which the men of the sixteenth century drew from the Fatherhood of God would be paralleled in their day by similar implications from the brotherhood of man. It would be too much to expect that they should have the same clear conception of the essential unity of human life or the same clear vision of the fundamental sameness and common destiny of the human race that we have to-day. The habits of the centuries are not changed in a few years, and the full implications of the Gospel are not exhausted by any single generation. But if the duties of man to man had been emphasized as assiduously during the past four hundred years as the rights of men before God have been emphasized, general history, particularly in most recent times, might have been very dif-

ferent. The world would not to-day be operating under competitive theory and practice in so many spheres, and the wide breach between the Christian Gospel and the social order would not exist.

After four hundred years of emphasis on the glorious principle of spiritual freedom, the grand conception of direct immediacy between the soul and its God, Lutheranism in our day ought to be able to recover from the one-sided emphasis of the Reformation age, and make plain that the principle of liberty has also its correlate principle, namely, the principle of obligation. The right of every man before God involves also the duty of every man to every other man. Only as Lutheranism recovers that truth and acts upon its implications can it make effective for our day the well-rounded Pauline conception of faith, which includes the idea that faith works through love.

Here, also, is an important element in the distinctive mission of the Lutheran Church and one very good reason for its continued existence as a distinct communion in the twentieth century. The effort to Christianize the social order too often is divorced from the heart of the Gospel and resolves itself into the secularizing of the religious mind. Christ's redemptive work is minimized and human achievement is substituted. Religion is identified with moral activities, codes of conduct, pledges, prohibitions, programs of service, social and moral uplift. The hand of love is made a substitute for the heart of faith. A pragmatic humanitarianism is made the whole measure of religion, and social regeneration is attempted from without. Modern American Christians are largely a race of Marthas, greatly busied about the doing of many things. That is why the religious history of our country is characterized by these sporadic spasms of public virtue, which many good people mistake for waves of genuine religion. Our religion is in danger of being resolved into mere morality and social ethics and thus made irreligious, and this in the end means that morality becomes immoral. Humani-

tarian activity without the Christian dynamic misses the very essence of Christianity and does not long remain humanitarian.

Mere prudential morality can never take the place of religion as a social force. It has serious limitations, not the least of which is its temporary character. Morality is never permanent, never permanently moral, unless it is grounded in reverence for personality. Now love for personality is at the basis of Christ's own ethic. And the social potency of any form of Christianity depends upon its evaluation of personality, especially the Person of Christ. Any Church or any type of Christian teaching that suffers itself to become perfectly at home in the world is without dynamic really to improve the world.

In the sixteenth century Luther protested with all the vigor of his personality against the practice of interposing ceremonies between the individual and his God and insisted on a restoration of vital and personal religion. To-day, in America, there is a loud call for the voice of a prophet with a very similar message. In Luther's day it was a matter of protesting against ceremonial good works that had taken the place of vital personal religion. In our day it is a matter of protesting against benevolent good works that are taking the place of vital personal religion. Our religion is in danger of becoming materialistic. The process must be reversed. Our material prosperity must be sanctified. Instead of secularizing the religious mind we must religify the secular mind. This calls for a message of prophetism.

In this situation Lutheranism has a distinct mission to the twentieth century. Calvinism has shown itself incapable of meeting the need. Calvinism has stood in the very midst of the tremendous wealth and the immense material prosperity of our country. But it has been utterly powerless to tear off the materialistic clothing of our twentieth-century American civilization and to clothe it with vital religion. It has in large measure accommodated itself and secularized its religious

instinct. In fact, there is a wide circle of scholarship which claims that Calvinism is responsible for the very essence of our capitalistic and materialistic civilization. Certain it is that there is a yawning gulf between the material prosperity of our country and the old-time Church with its spirit of devotion and its keen sense of personal religion. Calvinism had control of the field when that gulf began to open. It has stood by and has watched the gulf widen, and to-day it looks on, powerless to bridge the chasm.

Here Lutheranism has a message to deliver. It holds the possibility of introducing a vitalizing element into the religious life of our day. The theology of essential Lutheranism is not a mechanical but a vital theology. It is based upon a Person and it gathers about a Person. It conserves the personality of the believer. The Lutheran type of piety, therefore, is not based upon a code of conduct, a series of pledges, precepts and formulas. The Lutheran type of piety binds the individual into close, intimate personal fellowship with God, through faith in Jesus Christ. This fellowship, if it is genuine and properly informed, operates as a tremendous dynamic. For it is always easier to prompt ethical action on the basis of reverence for personality than on the basis of precept or even on the basis of principle. Thus the whole life is sanctified and all its activities are religious activities. The whole world is God's world and every man is God's man. The whole life of each man is vitalized with the religious principle, not only his relation with God but all his relations with his fellow men. Every calling is a sacred calling and every man can serve God where he is.

If that message could be adequately applied in the life of our day it would sanctify the whole round of secular activity, it would introduce a vitalizing element that would stay the disintegrating influences of materialism, and it would prevent the religious life of our country from vanishing in the thin air of sentimental emotionalism or the gaseous atmosphere of ethical culture or the attenuated mist of æsthetic

attainment. It would infuse new qualities into the social order and make a great contribution to the new era of social and economic invigoration. And the gulf that now yawns between our temporal prosperity and true religion would begin to close.

Here is a distinct mission for the Lutheran Church in our day, an incisive preachment of genuine vitalizing religion of the heart that redeems the whole man, soul, mind, and body, and sanctifies his every relationship. If Lutheranism can be brought to realize its responsibility to the whole round of human life it can remain true to its essential genius, and deliver a message that will make a paramount contribution in solving the most serious problem of modern times. That message it has not yet delivered. Lutheranism has not yet fulfilled its mission to modern times.

Another problem that is much discussed among Christians of modern times is the problem of organization. In many quarters Church union of some sort or other is held up as one of the highest ideals for which Christians should strive. In this matter, also, Lutheranism has a distinct message. It is one of the characteristics of essential Lutheranism, as we have seen, that it is ecumenical and unsectarian. It lays little emphasis upon names and organization. It is not sectarian in spirit and, as a matter of fact, it does not produce sects. With Lutherans, as with Luther, the organization and polity of the Church are not matters of divine revelation. They are secondary matters and are to be determined in each case by practical considerations. The sword which the Lutheran would use for the conquest of the world is not the sword of the flesh.

Lutheranism, therefore, distinguishes between the Church and the Churches, between Christian unity and Church union, between denominations and sects, between the communion of the saints and the corporation of the saints. Lutherans do not believe that external Church union is required by the Word of God, or by the logic of history, or by the modern necessity

of coöperation among Christians against a common enemy. In their generic confessions Lutherans state their conviction that "there will always be one holy Church. . . . For the true unity of the Church it is sufficient to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments; it is not necessary that the same human traditions, that is, rites and ceremonies instituted by men, should be everywhere observed." Accordingly, Lutherans do not try to devise a visible corporation of believers, but prefer to recognize Gospel Christians as their brethren in Christ, no matter under what roof they dwell or by what name they are known.

The denominational expression of Christianity is so deeply rooted in history and in the nature of things that it will probably persist through the indefinite future. The differences among the denominations are not arbitrary or whimsical, so that they might be legislated away or by common consent laid aside. They are not, as a rule, doctrinal or personal, but historical and deeply grounded. They are based in many cases on differences of race and genius, on differences of nationality and long historical heritage, on differences of language, psychology, temperament, political environment, and so forth. Denominations are not necessarily contending parties, each claiming to occupy the whole landscape. They may be different species of the same genius.

The disadvantages accruing from the denominational expression of Christianity are often overestimated. Usually this is due to a lack of historical perspective or a failure to understand the real nature of the Christian Church. Those who speak of the "reunion of Christianity," as though the corporate union of Christendom were an ideal condition that existed somewhere in the golden past, but has since been lost, speak without historical perspective. Even those who long for the reunion of Protestantism do not measure their terms. Much of the confusion in thinking on this subject arises from

ascribing to dignified denominationalism the ills of sectarianism. Sectarian strife and animosity are no more a necessary result of denominational organization than clannish feuds are a necessary result of family life. What the family is to society, the denomination is to generic Christianity. Only those who favor free love rather than chaste family life should speak of the "sin of denominationalism" as the "scandal of Christianity."

Essential Lutheranism expresses itself in a variety of external forms. Its polity ranges from episcopacy to extreme congregationalism. There are many Lutheran Churches in the world, and they all recognize one another as Lutheran. But the essence of Lutheranism does not vary. The differences of language and liturgy, of polity and practice, are incidental. Lutheranism is primarily the name of a faith. For that reason Lutherans believe that the disadvantages that accrue from the denominational expression of Christianity are not so great as the disadvantages that would accrue from Church union. No artificial aggregation that seeks to unify natural disparities can afford a guarantee against the strife of parties within the aggregation. In a church that existed by corporate union there would necessarily be a sacrifice of personality through emphasis on organization and machinery, uniformity, externals, bulk and things. There would be no small loss of individual freedom through the tyranny of the group. Above all, there would be a distinct diluting of loyalty to Christ and the Church, for the whole philosophy of loyalty makes it clear that professed devotion to a great ideal in general may easily become indifference, unless it is accompanied by devotion to something in particular.

Lutheranism holds that the Church is an organism. Its real spirit is Christ: its real heart is the Gospel. The apostolic ideal is not uniformity but unity in diversity. It is symbolized by the human body with many members. The Roman

Catholic Church has gained uniformity but has lost diversity and so has no real unity. The Protestant Churches have diversity and may well cultivate deeper unity. All the benefits that might be secured by Church union may be secured by Christian unity. There are some spheres of legitimate Christian enterprise that call for coöperation among Christians. There are problems in the religious life of our day whose solution cannot be accomplished by any single group of Christians. The progressive conquest of secular culture calls for more adequate group relationships among Christian believers. Ours is, therefore, a day of quest for organizational forms that will be the proper institutional expression of the dynamic that lies in the Gospel of Christ. Lutherans hold that there is a proper way for the development of such organizational forms. It lies along the lines of organic unity with the past, and not along the lines of artificially cemented union of present-day fragments. It should be a matter of vital growth rather than a matter of artificial manufacture.

Essential Lutheranism, therefore, is not averse to all coöperation in common Christian enterprise. But it holds that every coöperative movement should be suffused with the spirit of the Gospel and not with the spirit of legalism or externalism. The purpose of the movement must lie within the proper sphere of Church activity, else many evils will result both to the consciences of individuals and to the character of the Church as witness-bearer for Christ. But, while Lutherans may coöperate in federative union or administrative union among Christians, they see no advantage and many disadvantages in corporate or imperial union. An inclusive ecclesiastical corporation may be nothing more than a magnified sect. Moreover, practical considerations indicate that unity of effort in diversity of method is really the very best way to a given goal. Corporate union is no part of the Lutheran conception of the Church.

From the evangelical character of Lutheranism it follows that Lutherans are more concerned about the spirit and teach-

ing of a Church than about its size or its volume of achievement. From the ecumenical character of Lutheranism it follows that Lutherans are more concerned about the message of a Church than about its name or organization. For Lutheranism is primarily the name for evangelical catholicity.

WHAT IS LUTHERANISM?

V

J. M. REU

[WHEN, in 1929, Lutherans of the world gathered in Copenhagen to celebrate the four-hundredth anniversary of the publication of Luther's Small Catechism, the committee in charge invited Professor Reu to deliver the chief historical address for the occasion. It was most fitting. For over forty years Dr. Reu has been a student of Luther literature and has achieved an international reputation as one of the most brilliant source scholars of the Lutheran Church. His has been a life of quiet and painstaking scholarship, the results of which he has shared with others in publications of solid merit. He has for years maintained an uninterrupted correspondence with more than one hundred libraries and archives in Europe and has from time to time worked with first-hand material in more than twenty-five of its great libraries. As a member of the Synod of Iowa he has recently taken a leading part in the latest successful effort toward the union of three Lutheran bodies in America, viz., the Synod of Iowa, the Joint Synod of Ohio, and the Buffalo Synod, all of which represent a conservative section in Lutheran America.

Professor Johann Michael Reu was born in Diebach, near Rothenburg (a.T.), Germany, November 16, 1869. He was educated in the Latin School at Öttingen and later at the Mission Institute at Neuendettelsau, Germany. He was ordained by the Synod of Iowa in 1889, in which body he has served as pastor (Mendota, Illinois, 1889-1890; Rock Falls, Illinois, 1890-1899), as professor of theology in its Seminary since 1899, and upon many of its major boards and committees. He was made a Doctor of Theology by the University of Erlangen, Germany, in 1910 and Doctor of Literature by Capital University in 1926. He holds membership in many learned societies, among which are Pi Gamma Mu, *Verein für Reformationsgeschichte, Gesellschaft für deutsche Erziehungs-und Schulgeschichte.*

He has been a frequent contributor to such periodicals as: *Kirchenblatt; Lutheran Herald; Lutheran Church Review; Lutheran; Allgemeine Evangelisch-Luth. Kirchenzeitung; Archiv fuer Reformationsgeschichte; Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für deutsche Erziehungs-*

und Schulgeschichte; Katechetische Zeitschrift, etc. Since 1904 he has been Editor of *Kirchliche Zeitschrift.*

Among his notable publications may be mentioned: *Alttestamentliche Perikopen, exegetisch-homiletisch ausgelegt,* 1901-1906; *Quellen zur Geschichte des kirchlichen Unterrichts im evangelischen Deutschland,* in eight volumes, 1904-1927; *Explanation of Luther's Catechism,* 1906; *Wartburg Lesson Helps,* nine volumes, 1910-1918; *Ethics,* 1914; *The Way of Salvation,* 1915; *The Means of Grace,* 1916; *Life of Martin Luther; Thirty-five Years of Luther Research,* 1917; *Catechetics,* 1918; *The Work of Christ,* 1920; *The Book of Life,* 1921; *Homiletics,* 1922; *The Book of Books; The Completion of the Communion with God; A New English Translation of Luther's Small Catechism,* 1926; and, *Luther's Small Catechism, A History of Its Origin, Its Distribution and Its Use,* 1929. —*The Editor.*]

What is the distinctive characteristic of the Lutheran Church? One might say that it is the doctrine of justification by faith, the *Materialprinzip* of Protestantism. And certainly, that church can no longer be called Lutheran in which the blessed truth that the sinner is justified before God by grace for Christ's sake through faith does not permeate all teaching, faith and life. But does not also the Church of Calvin, where it has remained true to the faith of its founders, teach the *Solus Christus, Sola Gratia, Sola Fides,* at least with regard to those who are predestined to salvation from eternity? Another might point to the *Formalprinzip* of Protestantism, the *Sola Scriptura,* as the peculiar characteristic of Lutheranism. And it is just as true that the Lutheran Church which desires to stand on the principles laid down by the Reformation can never give up the doctrine that the Holy Scriptures alone are and must remain the source and norm for all Christian faith and life. But does not the Church of Calvin also proclaim this doctrine? Of course the Lutheran Church places a much stronger emphasis upon both the *Materialprinzip* as well as the *Formalprinzip* of the Reformation, than do the Reformed Churches; and yet in these two chief doctrines there are more points in which they agree

than there are points in which they differ. Therefore, it would hardly be correct to regard either one or both of these doctrines as the distinguishing characteristic, the peculiar possession of the Lutheran Church. What, then, is the distinguishing mark of the Lutheran Church?

A study of Luther's life ought to suggest the right answer; for surely the experiences and ideals that made him the great Reformer must somehow have left their mark on the Church that bears his name.

What Luther sought, what he sought so earnestly, so persistently, so strenuously, what he sought like one who realized that he was on the verge of despair, was a gracious God, a God with whom he, the sinner, might enter into communion. What he sought was not only a gracious God, but also the absolute, personal conviction that this God was gracious to him.

It was just this conviction that the Roman Church, in spite of all its guarantees of grace and merit, was unable to give. And without this conviction Luther found no peace. The guarantees that the Roman Church offered might satisfy the superficial; but they were not sufficient to quiet Luther's tender conscience. The thought of God as a consuming fire, as the Majestic and Holy One who hates sin and who sees and condemns even the secret and hidden desires of the heart, was ever before him. He needed a righteousness that did not rest on his good works nor on his feelings, a righteousness that remained valid in spite of them. He needed a guarantee that came from a source outside of himself, an objective, absolute guarantee which would give him assurance that such righteousness was available, available for him, that it had in fact already been imputed to him.

When Luther discovered what Paul meant in Romans 1:17, namely that in God there is not only the righteousness that condemns the sinner, but also a righteousness that effects his salvation, and that this righteousness had procured through Christ Jesus that righteousness in which the sinner stands

acquitted before God as soon as he has made it his own by faith; and when he learned that the means of grace are the bearers of this salvation which was wrought by God in Christ, because in them the invisible God comes down to the sinner, works faith in his heart, and imparts to such faith Himself and His whole salvation—then assurance of salvation, assurance of communion with God was established in his heart. God Himself had made Luther the man whom He could use as the Reformer of His Church.

Assurance of salvation, assurance of communion with God is to this day the distinctive characteristic of the Lutheran Church. And to this day it is just this assurance of salvation, this assurance of communion with God which Rome refuses to recognize. Of course Rome makes the claim that it is able to lead to assurance of salvation; it even boasts that no other Church on earth possesses such a comprehensive system of guarantees for this assurance. But on closer examination it proves to be not an absolute assurance, but only an assurance mediated and guaranteed by the Church. To demand an assurance that is not mediated and guaranteed by the Church, *i.e.,* hierarchical institution made up of priests, bishops and the pope is, according to Moehler, a Roman theologian, "a demoniacal thought."

Rome consistently places the Church between the individual soul and his God and denies that the two can ever come into communion with each other without the Church's mediation. God did, indeed, lift the veil and reveal Himself to men; and He has fixed this revelation in Holy Scriptures and preserved it for all times. If anyone desires to know who God is and what His relation is to man, he need only read the Scriptures; there he will find the answer. But who is capable rightly to understand and interpret the Scriptures, and so obtain assurance concerning God, His will and His relation to man? Certainly not the individual who, if left to himself so easily falls into error. For such interpretation of Scriptures man needs an institution, an authority inspired by

the Holy Spirit and exalted above every possibility of error in spiritual things. This God-appointed authority, declares Rome, is the Church, with its head, the pope. He is the permanent incarnation of the Spirit of God. His explanation of Scriptures is infallible. The interpretation he gives by virtue of his office concerning God and His will as revealed in Scriptures is the truth which men must believe and according to which they must live. Beyond this truth neither knowledge of God and His will, nor assurance concerning Him is possible. To presume to know more than the Church, that is the hierarchy consisting of the priests, bishops and the pope, is therefore the greatest folly and a most grievous sin.

But where was the truth when the Church and the pope erred, when the pronouncements made *ex cathedra,* by one pope were declared false and invalid by another, when there even were counter-popes—where was the truth then? And, moreover, how can an external, visible institution be a permanent authority in things concerning divine truth? Does not religious and moral truth appeal directly to the inmost soul, to the heart and conscience, and there, by virtue of its inherent efficacy create overwhelming witness concerning its own infallibility, so that man may reject it, but cannot question or dispute its testimony? To believe and to submit to something on the authority of another, should at best only serve as a stepping-stone; the believer must finally attain to that inward, absolute conviction that enables him, if need be, to resist all human authority, and to overcome the thoughts and feelings of his own heart.

And even then, when man attempts to come near to the God who has revealed Himself to him in Scriptures, the Church of Rome will not permit him to gain absolute assurance that he really has come into actual communion with God. On the one hand, Rome makes the efficacy of the means of grace conditional. They must be administered by a rightly ordained priest, and according to the ritual prescribed by the Church. On the other hand, Rome teaches that

the doing of good works is the way of salvation. By its very nature this way can never lead to assurance. The first condition makes assurance impossible; for who can guarantee to each individual soul that the *successio episcoporum* has never been broken, or that no offense was committed against the ritual prescribed for ordination to office, and that the officiating priest really is a duly ordained representative of the Church? And again, how can the layman have assurance that during the administration of baptism or the reading of the lengthy *canon missæ* every prescribed rule was carefully observed, and that at least the proper *intentio* was always present. And if this was not the case, then the sacraments lost their efficacy. Still less can the doing of good works, the way which Rome prescribes as the way of salvation, give assurance of communion with God; for who can know when he has done enough good works to merit salvation, or that his works really are good and acceptable to God? So long as our salvation, our communion with God depends on the acts of men, be it the priest or the layman, it remains uncertain, and to attain assurance of faith that can endure in the face of all doubt is out of the question.

Calvin recognized this fact. Therefore he did away with all mediating institutions that would come between God and man. He linked man who lives on earth directly with the God who lives and has His being in the world above, so that, according to Calvin, every human, temporal, worldly factor is excluded and man's salvation depends entirely upon God and His eternal will. Before the beginning of time God has determined whom He would lead to faith and salvation in the course of the ages, and in the case of him whom God has predestined to salvation, God's saving will will finally be accomplished, he will live and die in faith. According to this doctrine, man's salvation seems to be taken out of his own hands and made secure forever; for surely there is nothing more secure than the eternal will of God.

And yet it gives rise to serious questions. First and above

all: Who tells the individual soul that he is numbered among those whom God has chosen as His own from eternity, for whom in the fullness of time He sent Christ to die, and in whom He works and preserves the faith? In answer, the Synod of Dortrecht points to the fruits, faith, good works, not as a means by which man should earn his way to God, but merely as the visible proof that he has faith and belongs to those whom God has chosen. But man's works merely seem to be good, they are not really good. For decades many are reckoned among the disciples of Jesus because of their good works, while in reality they never were His own. Many works that shine before men as born of the Spirit are born out of the flesh. And when it comes to judging one's self, how easily one is tempted to self-deception! At best, one will be tempted to analyze one's outward life minutely, and to dissect the thoughts and emotions of the heart. This might be helpful for a knowledge of one's self and one's sin, if it were not for the danger of self-deception, but it can never bring certainty concerning God's eternal election and the soul's salvation. On the contrary, it will cause unrest and uncertainty, especially in the hearts of those who sincerely tremble for their salvation. And how much opportunity it will afford the devil to lull the ones into security and self-deception and so into a false assurance of salvation, and to bring to the consciousness of the others the faults and sins that mar their best works so forcibly that they lose faith in their eternal election and fall into despair.

Neither can Calvin satisfactorily answer the other serious question that his doctrine raises, namely, did God really descend from His transcendent abode and come to man? For according to his teaching the Word of God is not a means by which He comes down to man, but merely His voice, His *nuntius* and messenger. And the sacraments are, likewise, merely signs and symbols of His grace. Even in the Lord's Supper only he receives a blessing who, by the strength of his faith, rises to God who sits on the throne of His glory,

and there lays hold on the heavenly gift. God never really leaves His heavenly home, He never really personally and directly deals with man by earthly means. There is no bridge, no way that leads from God who dwells on high to man who lives on this earth, and therefore there is no place where man can find and meet God. But if this is so, how can the believer come to the happy assurance that he has entered into and is dwelling in communion with God?

Over against Rome as well as Geneva the distinctive characteristic of Lutheranism is that it is the religion of assurance, assurance of salvation, assurance of communion with God. We, too, recognize God as a transcendent and supreme Being who thrones above all time and space; but we also know Him to be a God who came down from His celestial abode, entered into the confines of time and space and here revealed Himself as the God of our salvation. We know Him as the God who, in the fullness of time, came down to us in His eternal Son and effected redemption—not for a chosen few only—but for all mankind. In the doctrine of the universality of God's will for man's salvation, Lutheranism possesses a truth which it can never relinquish, a truth as certain as the word of Holy Scripture that it was the "world" whom God loved and reconciled with Himself through His Son (John 3; 2 Cor. 5). And Christ procured salvation fully and completely, so that we need contribute nothing toward it even if we had the strength or the will to do so. All our good works, of whatever nature they may be, are neither required nor effective. What an immovable and eternal foundation for our salvation! God Himself has procured it and holds it in His hand.

And the message of this salvation for all the world, this greatest and sublimest revelation of God, is found in the New Testament of Holy Scriptures; for the Scriptures are above all, not a code of religious and moral laws, but the history of our salvation, and are to be regarded and used as such. And, used in this way, they are so clear and intelligible

that even the simplest Christian is able to grasp and understand the facts on which our salvation is based and their significance. The individual believer will certainly not lightly reject the interpretation of Holy Scriptures accepted by the Church, that is, by the communion of believers; but he does not need a priest to lead him into the correct understanding of the Word of God. On the contrary, it will be his duty, with the Scriptures as his rule and guide for all Christian faith and life, to test all preaching and teaching. The more he practices the art of comparing the Word with the Word, the more will he learn to understand it. He will arrive at independent knowledge of God and His will, His holiness and His grace. And since the Scriptures are an absolutely faithful image of the essence of God and His will, every one will be able to learn from them to know God as He is.

But the Bible is not only a message from God or information concerning Him; in this word of Scriptures as well as in every word that grows out of it, God Himself dwells and works. The Bible not only tells us about a God who lives far removed from men; but through the Bible He Himself comes to us; the Bible not merely tells us about the acts God performed to accomplish our salvation in the past, but it is the bearer of His own presence. Through the Bible and through every word that grows out of it, the transcendent God continues to come down to us, bearing the fullness of His power and grace. And when the hour comes that He has appointed for every soul (*Augustana,* 5) He causes him to feel this power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16) that lives inherent in His gospel. Then it becomes undeniably clear to him in his inmost soul that God is dealing with him and is seeking to bring just him into His kingdom.

It is true, man can reject the hand that God by His Word extends to save him; but he cannot deny that God actually did extend His hand and offered him the salvation He wrought through Christ. Where, however, the Word of God is permitted to effect its gracious purpose, there it creates

faith, it creates the new eye that recognizes in Christ, *his* Savior, the new hand that reaches out to God, the new will that surrenders all to Him. Thus, God and man came together; or rather, God brought the man who did not resist, into His communion; for it is altogether and only God's work that is accomplished here. God sent Christ and procured salvation; God sent out the message of His saving work through the apostles and their helpers; God caused this message to be fixed in writing; and each word born out of Scriptures to be the bearer of His presence; God came to man, worked in his heart and conscience and there created faith, and for Christ's sake pronounced the believing sinner righteous.

Since all this is the work of God and not of man, therefore this foundation for the Christian's salvation and his communion with God is absolutely firm and immovable; and since God dealt with the inmost soul of man and there convinced him, both of his own sinfulness and of His own grace, therefore man has absolute assurance concerning his salvation. Through the work of the Holy Spirit in the Word, God, Christ, sin, salvation have become realities to him, whose actual existence he can never doubt. Regarding heavenly things and especially his own salvation he can say with Paul: "I *know*" (Rom. 8; 2 Tim. 1). God, the unapproachable and supernal, by His Word spanned the gap between Himself and this world of time and space, came to the individual soul, drew him into His communion and made him blessed in the certain knowledge of his salvation.

And now, since man has become assured of his communion with God, the whole world receives a new aspect. The whole creation is his heavenly Father's house in which he may live in the blessed freedom of a child of God, according to the words of Paul: "All things are yours, and you are Christ's." This world, especially the place he fills in it, that is, his earthly calling, has become his field of labor, where he daily proves the obedience to God that is born out of love to Him.

Of course, there will come times when the devil, the world and the flesh will seek to rob him of his assurance of salvation; but then the Lutheran Christian need not despair. He has the means of grace. For him, his baptism, performed once, is an act of God that is valid throughout life. His baptismal certificate, which he delights to hang over his bed, each morning tells him: "You are beginning your daily task as a child of God." And in the evening when he remembers the sins of the day in repentant faith it assures him: "You are still God's child in spite of your sins, if you will only always flee for refuge into the arms of your heavenly Father." The Word of God is to him the voice of his heavenly Father which never grows weary of calling: "Come unto Me!" "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow!" The Lord's Supper is a channel through which he receives streams of new life from his exalted Lord. It is the sacrament in which Christ gives the Christian not only His Spirit, but also His glorified body to reassure him, and again and again to make him certain of his salvation and of his communion with God. Nor does he even now regard his good works as proof that he is a child of God. Nor does he constantly regard his faith with anxious fear, and dissect every thought and emotion of his heart to make sure that it is real. He does not look to his feelings to make sure that he has experienced the grace of God. He thinks not of himself, all his thoughts are directed to God; he clings to Him and the means of grace, and so fights his way back to the assurance of his salvation. Here is the Word that assures him: "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin"; "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life"; "And though we sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous." Here is the act of God, his baptism and the Lord's Supper, in which God dealt and continues to deal with him personally. These acts of God, independent of his works, his

thoughts, his feelings, these acts that never alter nor change, these acts that stand as firm as the everlasting hills—are the lasting guarantees, the changeless foundation for his assurance of salvation.

This assurance of salvation is the distinctive characteristic of the Lutheran Church.

The distinctive characteristic of the Lutheran Church is that it is the Church of assurance, assurance of salvation. This fact not only gives it a right to a separate existence, but also binds upon it the sacred obligation of maintaining this separate existence among the Churches of our great country; for no other Church is able to give such assurance to the believer—and assurance of salvation is a factor so important in religion that in its most perfect form religion cannot exist without it (Rom. 8:38).

But now the question arises: Can we, in view of the progress that textual criticism has made in our day, still hold to the conviction of past centuries that baptism and the Lord's Supper were instituted by Christ as means of grace? The Lutheran Church has no reason to fear textual criticism. On the contrary, she welcomes its labors and herself takes part in them. She knows that Eusebius [1] transmits Christ's missionary command in this form: "Go, and in my name make all nations my disciples, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," thus omitting the reference to baptism. But the Lutheran Church knows (1) that Eusebius was also familiar with the longer form, which we find in our Bible and which includes the reference to baptism, and that he uses just this form whenever he desires to give the exact quotation; (2) that all codices and manuscripts, including those from the time of Eusebius, contain this longer form of the baptismal command; (3) that the Didache implies that this is the universally accepted form; (4) that the genetive χριστοῦ in Colossians 2:11 probably is a genetive *auctoris,* and that Christ is here designated as the author of

[1] Died 339.

baptism; (5) that the fact that all the apostles administered baptism everywhere and regarded their practice self-evident can only be explained by the conclusion that Jesus himself must have commanded them to do so.

Of course, the Lutheran Church is not ignorant of the fact that Codex D, as well as a Syrian translation of the Gospel according to St. Luke, does not contain the words that we find in chapter 22, verses 19 b and 20 of the version of St. Luke as we find it in our Bible; and that St. Matthew's as well as St. Mark's Gospel does not contain the words, "This do in remembrance of me." But the Lutheran Church also knows: (1) that the oldest account of the Lord's Supper is that of Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 and that this account contains both, the words omitted in Luke's Gospel according to Codex D, as well as Christ's injunction, "This do in remembrance of me"; (2) that the absence of these words in Codex D can be explained satisfactorily; (3) that in the interpretation of the gospels the commonly accepted rule is to study, not merely one, but all the available accounts of an event, in order to arrive at a comprehensive conclusion regarding it. Thus, even the methods and results of textual criticism justify us in adhering to the Lord's Supper in both kinds, as instituted by Christ as a lasting gift to his Church to be celebrated repeatedly in her midst.

But are the Word, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, actual bearers and means of grace? Are they not rather merely its messengers, signs and symbols? Is not the doctrine of the means of grace that distinguishes and separates the Lutheran Church from all other Churches around her a later development? Even if that were so, it would not necessarily follow that this doctrine is false. But, as a matter of fact, it belongs to the first period of the Reformation and was taught by Luther consistently before, as well as after, Marburg. But even if Luther had not taught it, we would still believe, confess and proclaim it, because the New Testament teaches it with unmistakable clearness, and because we Lutherans not

only desire to believe and teach only what the Word of God teaches, but also desire to believe and teach the truth the Word of God teaches, without detracting one iota from it. Nor is this doctrine of the means of grace merely a vestige of Luther's pre-Reformation faith and experience. It is a sound and biblical truth. In support of this statement we cite the following passages from Scripture—for want of space we cannot elucidate them: 1 Peter 1:23, where the Word of the living and abiding God is called the "means" by which we are begotten again (cf. James 1:18-21; Rom. 1:16, etc.); Titus 3:5, where the washing of baptism is called the *means* of regeneration (cf. Matt. 28:29; Mark 16:16; John 3:5; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Eph. 5:26; 1 Cor. 6:11; Hebr. 10:22; 1 Peter 3:21; Rom. 6:2-5); the words of institution of the Lord's Supper, and 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:27-32, where the bread and the cup in the Lord's Supper are the *means* and bearers through which Christ gives us his body and blood. Let us accept these words as they stand without quibbling. Then we shall be able to see that the Lutheran doctrine of the means of grace is scriptural; we shall recognize the distinctive characteristic of the Lutheran Church, which is inseparably linked with this doctrine and can appreciate the right of the Lutheran Church to a separate existence among the Churches around her.

WHAT IS LUTHERANISM?

VI

SAMUEL GRING HEFELBOWER

[THE *sine qua non* of the philosophical spirit is the privilege and the freedom to think for one's self, to question and critically evaluate all experience, whatever the consequences. It is not what he thinks that makes a man a philosopher; it is how he thinks (οὐ φιλοσοφία ἀλλὰ φιλοσοφεῖν). It is a difficult art; for to think is much more difficult than to have thoughts; it brings frequently misunderstanding: for, acquiescent minds prefer not to have their peace disturbed by a suggestion that perhaps there are further truths to be learned.

It is this philosophical spirit that has characterized the thinking and the long career of fine public service of Dr. Hefelbower. To whatever tasks assigned to him he has applied his penetrating mind, placing truth before convenience and expediency and quite willing to suffer any consequences. Fully abreast with the onward march of thought he has been quick to see and make known the inevitable turns in the road long before many have seemed to realize that there are such things as turns. His has been the prophetic type of ministry.

He was born on November 11, 1871, at Newville, Pennsylvania. His academic training has been most rigorous: A.B., Gettysburg College, 1891; graduate of Gettysburg Theological Seminary, 1894; Leipzig University, 1895-1896 and 1901-1902; Halle University, 1902; Princeton University, 1910-1911; M.A., and Ph.D., Harvard University, 1911-1914. He was ordained to the Lutheran ministry by the West Pennsylvania Synod in 1894 and served two pastorates, first at Manheim, Pennsylvania, 1896-1899 and then at Frostburg, Maryland, 1899-1901. Now a member of the Ministerium of the Synod of Illinois, he has also been connected with the Synod of Maryland and the Synod of Kansas.

Service in the field of higher education was plainly marked out for him; and, indeed, he may point back with pride to a highly fruitful and long career in this service. From 1902 to 1904 he was professor of history at his Alma Mater. Then followed his six-year period as President of Gettysburg College, during which time great

advances toward full academic recognition were achieved. At Harvard University he was made assistant in philosophy, 1912-1913. For six years he taught philosophy at Washburn College, Topeka, Kansas, 1914-1920, and since 1920 he has held a similar chair at Carthage College.

Professor Hefelbower has added distinction to his name as contributor to philosophical, theological and religious literature. His volume, *The Relation of John Locke to English Deism* (1918), has had wide recognition. His voice has been heard in the *Lutheran Quarterly* (first editor of the Foreign Theological Department), the *American Journal of Theology,* the *Lutheran Observer,* the *Lutheran Church Work,* the *Lutheran, Sunday School Times,* and lately in three very interesting pamphlets: *The Place of Scholarship in Ministerial Training, Religious Education in the Program of Our Colleges and Seminaries,* and *Doctrine and Social Service from the Point of View of Psychology* (bulletins published by Carthage College, 1922, 1923, 1925).

Professor Hefelbower is a member of the Honorary Academic Fraternity, Phi Beta Kappa. He holds two honorary degrees, Doctor of Divinity, Dickinson College, 1905, and Doctor of Laws, Gettysburg College, 1925.—*The Editor.*]

We are living in a critical age; religious thought to-day is critical. People generally are unwilling to accept things on authority; they ask for reasons that will justify their thought and action. Principles of conduct and our most ancient institutions are being examined and tested to see whether we can hold them in the present generation. A vociferous minority, somewhat iconoclastic, condemns practically everything we have received from the past merely because it is old. But generally speaking they do not represent this age. The first third of the twentieth century is critical rather than skeptical; it is constructive in its thinking rather than destructive. If it fosters doubt for a time it does so in order that its convictions may be more firmly grounded.

Christianity itself, and more especially organized Christianity, has felt the effect of this spirit. Seldom, if ever, in the history of the Church has it been called upon to stand up under a more searching criticism than we witness to-day.

Many of the leaders of present-day thought are calling on the Christian Church to vindicate not only the truth of its message but also its right to exist. We are told that it has outlived its usefulness, that it represents a stage of human development that the cultured man of the twentieth century has outgrown. It is true there are not many who hold these extreme views, but they are industrious in spreading their anti-Christian or anti-Church propaganda.

Very often this criticism appears in a milder form. Many devout believers, who are not directly affected by such radical views, are convinced that the Christian Church, more especially its Protestant branch, has outlived the conditions that once justified denominational divisions. They believe that the time has come for obliterating sectarian dividing lines; they say that if we are one in Christ we should be organically one on earth. Denominational divisions are not popular to-day; many of our best leaders condemn them. We are thinking in terms of united effort in almost all other fields; in industry, in scientific investigation, in social welfare, in international relations, and in the charitable and mission enterprises of the Church. If denominations are to continue they must justify their separate existence in the presence of this general tendency.

What is Lutheranism? The very title of this book shows that it recognizes the critical spirit of this age. We are challenged to say what we believe; and this involves the further question why we believe it. It is not enough to show that the Lutheran type of faith is justified historically; it must also vindicate its continued existence in the present. The question of the hour is not, why did Lutheranism appear four hundred years ago, but why should it exist to-day? Does it have a distinctive message that this generation needs and does not find so well expressed elsewhere? It is just one of the many various interpretations of Christianity. Their dividing lines at first were clear and sharply defined. Of late years they have become hazy and indefinite. Many leaders

interpret this change to mean that such divisions should soon cease to be. Are they right? If not, why not? The definition of Lutheranism that is required to-day must of necessity be a justification of its continued existence as a separate and distinct denomination.

Lutheranism is a way of interpreting Christianity in terms of thought and life. It must of necessity have a doctrinal side and a practical side. By nature man is religious. He recognizes a higher power or powers with which he stands in a relation that has meaning for life. When he recognizes one God revealed in and through Jesus Christ as the Savior from sin, who is God manifest in the flesh, he is a Christian. But man by nature is not only religious, he is also rational; he has an inward urge to think his religious beliefs through as far as possible. This results in the formulation of religious doctrines. With the unlettered they may be very crude, they may be so indefinite and changeable that one can scarcely call them doctrines; but they are there. A religion without doctrines of some sort is psychologically impossible for a rational being such as man.

But when we think of our religious beliefs and undertake to define them, we must think in terms of the thought-life of the age in which we live. This is true in every field of human interest. The astronomer is no longer interested in the geocentric theory of the solar system, except as a matter of history. He thinks now in terms of the heliocentric theory. Physicians do not speak of the spirits or even the humors that they must combat. Several centuries ago they did, but medical thought has changed with each succeeding age. The same is true, probably to a somewhat less extent, in religious thought. Those who formulated our confessions and developed our systems of theology did so on the background of the thought of the age in which they lived—an age that to a great extent thought in other categories than those that are current to-day. The framers of the Nicene Creed witnessed their belief in the deity and humanity of Christ largely in

terms of the Neo-Platonic philosophy which prevailed in the fourth century of our era. The same is true of our own Lutheran confessions; they were written under the influence of the revived scholasticism of the era of the Reformation, which lasted through the period of dogmatism. It is a type of philosophy that has long since ceased to be, except in a modified form among Roman Catholic theologians. Yet it gave them many of their philosophico-theological terms and helped to give general form to their theological system. Furthermore, these early writers of our confessions and molders of our dogmatic theology did their thinking under the determining influence of certain definite problems and false teachings that they were called upon to meet. They were combating Roman errors, Zwinglian-Calvinistic theology, and the doctrinal aberrations of certain enthusiasts. Hence, of necessity, the theological expression that they gave to the faith of our Church is orientated toward certain errors, many of which have either changed form or have almost ceased to exist. This means that in the theological traditions of Lutheranism there are many elements that were significant when the theology was formulated that no longer occupy the position they once held.

There is just one type of faith that is known as Lutheranism. The great basal truths of our Church abide, but its traditional forms bear temporal earmarks. Our confessions and the great dogmatic systems of our Church set forth our type of religious faith in a form that was determined largely by conditions that obtained three and four hundred years ago. It is true, especially in America, that some portions of the Lutheran Church treat the faith of our fathers as if it were almost identical with the letter of its written expression. To them Lutheranism is a completed, changeless system of theological doctrines set forth for all time by the fathers of our Church in dogmas that are binding, both as to the faith that is confessed and as to the form in which it is presented. According to their way of thinking, to teach Lutheranism is to

drill young men in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century dogmas. To know Lutheranism is to be able to answer the questions of to-day by the formulas of three and four hundred years ago. In a word, they conceive Lutheranism as something static, once for all completed, unchanged and unchanging. Several decades ago the great conservative leaders of European Lutheranism could scarcely believe the report that Schmid's *Kompendium* was widely used as the chief, or in some instances the only textbook of Lutheran dogmatics here in America. It and other books like it are not a theological norm for determining what Lutheranism is; it merely answers the question as to what Lutheranism was. Whether it was this misuse of his book in America, or misunderstanding of his purpose elsewhere, that called forth a protest from him later is not known. But in his preface to the second German edition of his *Kompendium,* Schmid resented the misinterpretation of his purpose in making this compilation: ". . . as if it were my opinion that all that is needed to meet the wants of the present day is the immediate adoption of this old theology."

It is this position that Schmid criticizes that is largely responsible for the superficial hostility to confessions that is so common to-day. Earnest Christians, alive to twentieth-century problems, know that it was impossible for theologians several centuries ago to formulate systems of theology that can meet all problems that arise now. Accordingly, they become hostile toward all confessions and call for a creedless Christianity, which in its extreme form is practically not feasible and probably impossible.

But there is a better way to define our faith. Instead of trying to make Lutheranism a force in the religious world of to-day by reproducing in all its details the theology of the age that gave it birth, we can accept the faith of the Church of the Reformation, as confessed in its great symbols, more especially in the Augsburg Confession, and think it through in view of the problems we must meet to-day. If we would

tell this generation what Lutheranism is we must know not only what it was, but what answers it gives to the problems that confront us now. Lutheranism is a great historical movement with its roots deep in the past, and it is also a living way of interpreting Christianity in the present. If we would present Lutheranism to this age we must speak the language that is used to express religious thought in the twentieth century. The great central truths of our faith abide in all essential respects; they are the same to-day that they were when forged in the white heat of Luther's personal religious awakening. But just as that age had problems and tasks that distinguished it from others, the twentieth century has its own peculiar problems to meet. And if Lutheranism is to serve this age it can do so only by meeting the problems that now confront the Christian Church.

This was clearly recognized and set forth by the leaders of European orthodox Lutheranism of the last generation. Frank, of Erlangen, probably the greatest conservative theologian of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, discusses this in his *System der Christlichen Sittlichkeit.* He presented his position more clearly in a letter under date of January 9, 1893, in the following words:

> We know ourselves at home in our church, not as slaves, who are servilely bound to the letter of the confessions, much less to the theology of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but as free and willing sons, who know the meaning of our fathers, and feel ourselves inwardly at one with them. Hence we know how to distinguish between the substance of the confessions, which is to be ascertained historically by reference to the antitheses, and the many accidental additions, which unavoidably attach themselves to it, and are not obligatory upon us.

The late Bishop von Scheele of Sweden has long been recognized as a good representative of modern Lutheranism.

Zoeckler, of Greisswald, said that he "possesses a reverential holding to the traditional spirit of evangelical liberty and a conscientious preservation of the inheritance of the fathers." Bishop von Scheele wrote the section on Christian Symbolics in Zoeckler's *Handbuch der Wissenschaftlichen Theologie,* and also a *Theologische Symbolik.* He says:

> The normative authority of the symbols, which is throughout biblically conditioned, must also be limited by their relation to contemporary history. The symbols must be understood as belonging to their time, so that we must distinguish between their essential part and the form of their contents. Only their actual content must be regarded as essential and lasting, while their form must be considered accidental and capable of improvement, and, perhaps in certain instances, needing improvement.

He also says:

> Even the symbols, to a certain extent the flower and crown of church doctrine, dare by no means be treated as a fetter legally binding, and dare not be regarded as a new yoke that burdens conscience (*non imprimunt credenda*), but only as a free expression for the scriptural faith of the church (*exprimunt credita*). But a church that truly claims and wishes to bear the name of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, must stand firmly by this, that its subscription to the doctrines laid down in the church does not concern the letter, but only *the peculiar type of Christianity* therein expressed. And the reason for this is, we know and we are certain that this type is true and genuine in every essential, and therefore cannot be given up without at the same time giving up Christianity.

It is clear that the reformers themselves held essentially this same attitude toward the confession. The first Latin text

of the Augsburg Confession, published by a responsible party, which was later made the authoritative Latin text of the Book of Concord, was not exactly the confession as it was read before the Diet but an amended edition from the hand of Melanchthon. What we have been calling the Unaltered Augsburg Confession is already an altered form of confession. Nobody knows exactly what the original unaltered text of the confession was; we are probably close to it in the critical text published by Tschackert a generation ago. During the years immediately following the Diet of Augsburg, Melanchthon reëdited the text of the confession a number of times. At least several of these amended texts were approved by Luther. Nicholas Selneccer, one of the authors of the Formula of Concord, says: "The later confession was revised in 1538, and was read over and approved by Luther, as witnesses still living affirm." The faith that was confessed, "the peculiar type of Christianity," as von Scheele calls it, remained the same; there was no change in doctrine. But in the judgment of Melanchthon, and in some degree at least in the opinion of Luther, new conditions justified changed forms of expression.

In the spirit of Frank and von Scheele, whose Lutheran orthodoxy cannot be questioned, an attempt is here made to set forth what Lutheranism is in this age of theological confusion. This will not be a full discussion of what Lutheranism is in all its distinctive characteristics; it does not even aim to be a complete outline of the essential features of the Lutheran system of doctrine. Others will probably define it by setting it forth on the background of its great historical antitheses. This is the best approach to it; it will lead us to the very heart of Lutheranism. We can understand it best when we know what it opposed. The following discussion will not follow this path. Certain characteristics of religious thought of to-day will be noted and an attempt will be made to show what Lutheranism has to offer on the issues that are raised.

Much of our religious discussion of pulpit and press to-day concerns the central and constitutive elements of Christianity as traditionally understood. These are challenged in large circles, and interpretations are offered which leave us practically no Christianity. Many of the great fundamentals of our faith are toned down and modified until they become something essentially different from what we have understood them to be. Of course this is not the only note that is heard; we have powerful defenders of the faith of our fathers. But the extremely liberal opinions are characteristic of the more vocal religious thought of to-day. For practical purposes this discussion is limited to the presentation of what Lutheranism offers on the points raised; it will be defined on the background of its antithesis to current liberal thought.

In general, Lutheranism is a way of thinking of Christianity, a way of interpreting Christianity in terms of thought and life. It is not only a system of divinity, it is also a philosophy of life. It undertakes to set forth man's relation to God in rational concepts, and to show the practical implication of this relation as thus understood. It is entirely proper to say that Lutheran piety is the natural expression of Lutheran doctrine. It is not external as in Romanism, or legalistic as it was at first in the Reformed branches of the Protestant Church, but inward and confiding toward God and results in love toward God and man. The question that we must answer is this, What does this "peculiar type of Christianity" mean to-day? or in other words, How does Lutheranism meet the problems of the twentieth century?

When we survey the religious world of the twentieth century we are at once impressed by the confusion that prevails in so many parts of the Protestant Church. Theological and religious thinking so often lacks the positive note that throughout the ages has characterized the great leaders of Christian thought. Theological professors and preachers question this and challenge that. They let the world know

what they do not believe, but it is hard to find out what they do believe. They take up some ancient dogma that had sense and meaning for the age that produced it, wrest it from its historical context, and exhibit its limitations or possibly its irrationality for us to-day, and declare that the whole doctrinal system of which it was a part, possibly only a minor or auxiliary part, is false and worthless.

Over against this negative type of Christian thought, a part of non-Lutheran conservative Protestantism here in America has set up what is commonly called Fundamentalism. It aims to retain the conservative doctrinal positions of the past, but in doing so it supports its positions with a literalism that is untenable to-day. Christian faith is sometimes made identical with accepting this or that portion of Scripture in its bald, literal sense. Good men, otherwise intelligent, have condemned all who do not believe that the world was created in six days of twenty-four hours each as irreligious unbelievers. This sort of Christian apologetics tends strongly to conceive Christianity legalistically. Sin is made to appear predominantly as the breaking of God's laws, and salvation as escaping Divine penalty.

Lutheranism is neither modernistic nor fundamental, in the sense in which these terms are popularly understood to-day. In contrast to the confused negative thinking of a large part of the more liberal leaders of the Protestant Church of to-day, it presents a positive type of Christian belief. Lutheranism believes something. There may be much difference of opinion concerning certain peripheral theological dogmas, but there is practical unity concerning the great essential truths of the Lutheran type of faith. Furthermore, the definiteness of the Lutheran message to the twentieth century is not to be confused with the positive teaching of Fundamentalism. The latter lacks perspective, it confuses truths that are basal and constitutive for the Christian religion with teachings that are at most of minor importance and are some-

times merely expressions of the stubborn dogmatism of ignorance.

Several months ago a survey was made by questionnaire of the beliefs of representatives of the more important Protestant denominations. It is true that the questions asked were formulated largely on the assumption that the most important difference in Protestant thought to-day in this country is expressed in the modernist-fundamentalist controversy. This probably misses the most significant cleavage in present-day religious thought. But in spite of this the results were such as to confirm the position here set forth; namely, that Lutheranism represents a body of positive beliefs, in which there is substantial agreement on the great essentials of Christianity. The agreement of Lutheranism on the fundamental truths of Christianity was so marked that the editor of a non-denominational religious journal observed that probably the Lutheran Church was the only large Protestant body that was entitled to speak of its confession. In brief, to an age that is confused and uncertain as to what it believes, Lutheranism offers a clearly defined message; it knows what it preaches.

Another significant feature of the religious thought of to-day is its indifference to or its hostility toward the confessions. A large number of influential leaders of Christian thought are disposed to regard the ancient symbols of the Church merely as more or less important markers of the way along which the Church has advanced from the days of Christ and the apostles until now. In other words, the confessions have only historical significance. But the Lutheran Church evaluates its historical symbols very differently. They stand for it as the testimony of the confessors to the faith that was held when the confessions were written. They contain and set forth in formal statement the faith of the founders of our Church, which still is held by their successors. These ancient symbols have authority for Lutherans because, and in so far

as they exhibit Christianity as revealed in the New Testament and wrought out in the life of the Church. True Lutheranism is biblical and confessional. It recognizes Scripture as the ultimate and sole authority in matters of faith and practice; it teaches without reservation that man has a revelation from God. It is convinced that the fundamental and essential truths of that revelation are found in its historical confessions. This accounts for its clearly defined message in an era of theological confusion.

But we should not forget that unity in our religious thinking may be a source of weakness as well as of power. If it is the result of spontaneous agreement that springs from a thorough and comprehensive study of religious truth, it is a source of strength; but if it arises from the acceptance of doctrinal standards on the basis of authority, it may prove to be the feet of clay to the Church that enforces it. There is a growing conviction that American Lutheranism is weak just here, that we are suffering from too much authority and too little independent thinking.

The most important religious discussions to-day concern the central truths of Christianity. The concept of sin has always had an important place in the religious thought of mankind. In some form or other we find it almost everywhere. Sometimes it is conceived in such a way that we who live under the enlightenment of Christianity would scarcely recognize it as sin. It may be merely a departure from the sanctioned tribal customs; it may be disloyalty to ancestors; the idea varies almost endlessly, but it is there and plays a major rôle in determining the religious reflections of men.

Probably in no other way does the loose thinking of the present generation stand out more vividly than in its treatment of sin. Some of our reputed Christian leaders seldom speak of it, and when they do they are so confused that you cannot find out just what they mean. It is not popular to preach it in its biblical sense as an offense against God; consequently many of our "noted" preachers do not mention it.

Pulpit and pew have to a great extent lost their sense of sin and guilt. They have a vague notion that something is wrong that should be set right. They are convinced that the Christian Church and the Christian pulpit stand out against something that ought to be opposed. They advocate an improved order that should be established. This conviction leads to programs of moral reform and social betterment. Effective organizations are set up with these ends in view. The Church is organized and at work and much good is being accomplished. It is so completely organized that sometimes it appears as little more than a group of organizations feverishly doing things. But what of sin and guilt, and redemption through an atoning Savior? These are the great truths that constitute Christianity as found in the New Testament and preached in the Church of the Reformation and set forth in our confessions. Without them you do not have Christianity as given us by Christ and the apostles. Yet you seldom hear these truths from many pulpits to-day. Much of our religious literature lets them suffer eclipse behind religious educational programs and plans for advancing human welfare. You cannot have too much religious education so long as you treat it merely as a means to an end; namely, the developing of Christian faith; and you cannot emphasize social service too much in the Church if you conceive it as the normal and necessary expression of that faith. Love God above all else and your neighbor as yourself. The new dispensation started with a voice crying in the wilderness, "Repent! Repent!" Christ went about preaching repentance. The apostles took up the message, and down through the ages the testimony of the great spiritual leaders proves beyond the possibility of doubt that a vivid sense of sin and guilt and consequent human need is the beginning of saving faith. But how seldom in some churches do we hear to-day the heart-searching call to repentance. In its stead we have learnèd discussions of problems, most of them moral, some of them social and political, few of them spiritual. Many

so-called Christian pulpits seldom, if ever, drive home the great evangelical truths. As a result, evidence is not wanting that we are sinking into religious ignorance. Recently in a sister denomination, a layman, who is a splendid citizen, an intelligent, successful professional man, an officer in his church, and a teacher in the Sunday School, spoke somewhat as follows: "Why should some preachers emphasize repentance so much before such a congregation as ours? They are good people who are not guilty of sin, they break no law, why should they be called upon to repent? And what is sin anyway?" This is but the natural and inevitable result of the preaching that blurs and confuses the gospel message. There are thousands of other "intelligent Christians" like him. When the awful fact of sin and guilt is not preached, what else can you expect from the pew? It is true, this is not the first time that organized Christianity in the Protestant world has forsaken the message of Christ. One is reminded of the pious peasant woman of northern Germany who lived about a hundred and twenty-five years ago, as reported by Seeberg. She said to a neighbor: "I like to talk with our preacher except on the subject of religion, for he does not understand that."

When the typical progressive preacher of to-day does discuss sin, he so often gives it an interpretation that is utterly foreign to the meaning of Christ. Our Lord conceived sin as a radically wrong relation of man to God. The sinner is estranged from God, he is hostile to God. The affections that determine his life are self-centered and world-centered. In this state he is helpless, as far as his own powers are concerned. Instead of this biblical view of sin some modern preachers conceive it as an embarrassing survival of an earlier stage of human development. It is a defect to be regretted that will eventually disappear. But it is not a soul-damning estrangement from God that can be overcome only through Divine grace. Some other progressive preachers, when they speak of sin, present it as a sort of social wrong-mindedness—

improper social functioning of the individual. In a word, they preach sin merely as a human defect on the social level. Between these distorted and inadequate conceptions of sin and the teaching of Christ and the apostles there is a chasm so great that we must say that these conceptions of sin are unchristian, they are pagan.

In the presentation of these liberal and negative interpretations of sin, we have already set forth the message concerning sin and guilt that Lutheranism preaches to men of the twentieth century. The Lutheran Church takes sin seriously, just as Luther did, when as a monk he was weighed down under the burden of an oppressing sense of guilt and cried out, "My sins, Oh, my sins!" And when it was pointed out to him that the "I believe in the forgiveness of sins" of the creed meant real sins, his sins, there was born that understanding of human sin and Divine grace that shook Rome, and will overcome present-day misbelief when it is properly preached. Lutheranism takes its stand on the New Testament conception of sin; it presents it as a radically wrong attitude of man toward God, as a wrong relation to God, expressed in terms of hostility toward God and love of the world. It never wearies of emphasizing the awful facts of sin and guilt and man's need of help, which is found only in an atoning Savior, who is God manifest in the flesh.

This already suggests another error in much of the religious thought of to-day. Along with the weak and confused conception of sin there naturally goes a weak and confused conception of salvation; the one implies the other. This confusion appears both in the teaching as to what salvation is and as to the way in which it is brought about. If we think of sin merely as a defect that man has not yet outgrown, salvation can mean nothing more than the achievement of a higher stage of development. It is the result of a natural process that will run its course in due time. And if we describe sin as man's failure to fit into the social order, salvation is nothing more than the socialization of the individual who is

socially maladapted. When the New Testament conception of sin and guilt is given up, salvation becomes merely an element in a program of reform. Evangelical Christianity proclaims the absolute necessity of redemption and advocates reform through redemption; it preaches, first, salvation from sin's guilt and power, and good works as the necessary expression of the life of the forgiven sinner. Many pulpits to-day preach reform and neglect redemption.

The contrast is just as great when we consider the way in which salvation is brought about. If sin is merely a developmental survival you can get rid of it by patience and nurture. If it is social wrongmindedness you can correct it by teaching proper social attitudes. In any event, there is no need of a salvation wrought by God or of a Savior sent of God. Man with his own power can rise spiritually; give him a good chance, that is, provide proper environment, and encourage him, and he will become a saint. It is an attempt to establish the moral idealism of Christianity on an exclusively, or almost exclusively humanistic basis. This is far removed from the teaching of Christ and the apostles as confessed and preached in the Lutheran Church; but it is the logical result of substituting a naturalistic or humanistic conception of sin for the teaching of the New Testament.

It is hard to say how widely these notions of salvation are held to-day. So many persons use the traditional terms apparently in a most reverent spirit, but they understand them as meaning little more than a program of individual or social reform. To them redemption signifies the emancipation of man from such influences as hamper spiritual growth or a happy life. Salvation is the triumph of the higher over the lower in the individual and in society. Regeneration means reform. The atonement doesn't fit in with this way of thinking, hence it is not spoken of. In a word, if sin is not an offense against God, as many seem to think to-day, redemption need not be the establishing of a proper relation of man to God.

But, as stated before, Lutheranism takes sin seriously, hence it also takes salvation seriously. It teaches that the sinner is helpless in his sin as far as his own powers are concerned, and that God out of love for the sinner, that is because of grace, provides an atonement in and through Christ for the establishment of a right relation to God, which the sinner appropriates in saving faith. A loving Father seeks out man in spite of his sin. He comes to man in Christ before man comes to Him, and through the Holy Spirit becomes a regenerating agent working in him, turning his spiritual life toward God. The setting up of this right relation of man to God has a godward side and a manward side. Man is saved when with his whole heart he believes that God for Christ's sake forgives his sins. Salvation is by grace through faith, it is not the result of natural processes or of human effort.

In the background of these radically divergent views concerning sin and salvation, there lurks another confusion that is very widespread to-day. Man has always had trouble in explaining the relation between morality and religion. If you interpret conduct idealistically your moral theory and religion are found on the spiritual side of life; they seem to be made of the same spiritual piece. Yet they are different. When you try to see life steadily and to see it whole, these two basal human interests are easily confused. Very many of the so-called liberal leaders of the Christian pulpit consciously or unconsciously identify them; very many define religion wholly or almost wholly in terms of morality. The morally good man is held up before the congregation as the religious man. Christianity becomes nothing more than good character expressing itself in good conduct. The transcendent anchorage of spiritual values is neglected. Christianity is life in its best earthly expression, but it is something less than life in God through Christ. This stands in sharp contrast with the New Testament teaching concerning religion and morality, which is fixed in the theological tradition of our Church.

It teaches that Christianity is human life consciously orientated toward God through Christ. It is not morality; it is the God-given condition of the highest type of morality. Out of sorrow for sin and faith in Christ as our Savior there springs up a new life. Good works do not constitute salvation; they are the necessary expression of the life of him who is saved. Salvation by grace through faith, as taught in the New Testament and revived by Luther, is the Lutheran protest against the righteousness of works as taught by Rome. It is likewise the Lutheran protest against the doctrine of salvation by morality as taught to-day by many.

When sin is reduced to a vanishing defect or social maladaptation, and salvation is presented as an effective human scheme of reform, there is little need of a Savior. Much of current religious literature and very many sermons that are preached to-day show this. Yet Christ is not set aside. He is not ignored; he is referred to time and time again. He is appealed to on moral issues; there is a widespread influential sentimental loyalty to him. This takes on various forms. Jesus is often preached as the ideal man, the perfect representative of the type of manhood that we should strive to realize in our own lives. Sometimes the unsullied beauty of his character, possibly also the transcendent moral nobility of his life, are set forth in a way that moves men toward higher living. Sometimes he is conceived as a great religious genius, who in his own religious life shows man the way to achieve the higher and better things. Jesus is exalted; he is called our Savior, or our Redeemer. But he is not preached as a Savior who atones for sin, as a living spiritual power, as God active in redemption. Much so-called Christian preaching to-day misses the redemptive note. Though many liberal thinkers preach Christ, they present an interpretation of him that slurs over his redemptive work in such a way that he appears as something very different from the Christ of the New Testament.

In spite of endless variation of opinion on the subjects just

discussed, there are two significant general observations that should be made. In large circles to-day there is a marked tendency to conceive man and his interests from the point of view of his intimate relation to the natural order. Biological man has become an important factor in determining our views of human life and destiny. Man is intimately linked up with nature; he is a part of nature. Very often this conception is emphasized in such a way that his relation to God is minimized and made to appear as a minor motive in determining beliefs. The result is a naturalistic philosophy of life that undervalues, or in some instances denies the existence of that which is spiritual. Life is interpreted largely or wholly from the point of view of man's relation to animal creation, of which he is biologically a part; and his divine origin and heavenly destiny are neglected. Over against this stands the simple and sublime biblical conception of man, which is fundamental in Lutheran theology. "In the image of God created He them." "That whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life." There may be difference of opinion as to God's methods of creation, but there can be no difference of opinion as to the fact; man is the child of God, made in His image, the object of His saving grace.

There is another point on which, strange as it may seem, many liberal religious leaders and orthodox Reformed theologians often show some agreement. There is a legalistic vein in the theology of Geneva; sin as the breaking of divine law is so emphasized at times that we almost lose sight of it as the wrong attitude of the heart. On the other hand, very liberal men to-day, who conceive sin humanistically as incomplete development or as wrong social functioning, magnify the outward act and neglect the inner motivation of life. They are content to deal with results. Lutheranism seeks ultimate spiritual and moral causes. It goes behind the wrong act to the wrongly motivated heart. Sin is primarily an attitude of the inner life, of which the sinful act is the

outward expression. This difference is fundamental. It goes to the very heart of the Lutheran conception of sin and salvation. Much of the discussion of sin to-day misses the point because it treats it too superficially.

There are also certain practical interests of the Church that should be considered when we are studying the possible contribution that Lutheranism can make to the Protestant Church of America. The Roman Catholic Church has a theory of worship. Its church service is determined by its doctrine of the sacrifice of the mass and of the priesthood. In the Protestant group the Episcopalian and the Lutheran Churches stand almost alone; each has a distinctive liturgical theory. Most of the other denominations do not have well-developed principles to guide them in setting up an order of worship for church service. As a result, very often, divine service is a confused and undignified combination of acts of worship which, as a result of this confusion and lack of dignity, often fails, in part at least, to achieve the purpose of divine worship, namely, the upbuilding of the spiritual life.

The Lutheran Church from the beginning has been a liturgical Church. It has always stood out against a disorderly or an unordered procedure in divine worship. Luther gave the Church that bears his name the evangelical principles that have, with some exceptions, determined its forms of worship. He made the preaching of the gospel central, instead of the sacrifice of the mass. But he was cautious; he broke away from Rome gradually and always emphasized order and the spontaneity of true worship. Professor Rendtorff, of Leipzig, brings this out very clearly in his *Geschichte des christlichen Gottesdienstes unter dem Gesichtspunkt der liturgischen Erbfolge.*[1] He quotes a letter by Luther written in 1545, the year before he died, to George of Anhalt, in which Luther said: "I am adverse to ceremonies that are necessary and am an enemy to those that are not necessary." Rendtorff observed that Luther was afraid that ceremonies

[1] Page 22.

would paralyze the life of the worshiping congregation and would interfere with evangelical freedom. In proof of this he quotes Luther again: "It is easy for ceremonies to become laws; once laws are established they become snares of conscience and the pure doctrine is obscured and destroyed." Accordingly, we are admonished not to evaluate them too highly, for "an order of worship is an external thing and does not commend us to God."

The purpose of worship is to promote the spiritual life; the purpose of established forms of worship is to guide the meditation of the worshiping congregation in such a way as to be most effective in achieving this. Accordingly, the final test of a Lutheran liturgy is its influence in developing the spiritual life of worshipers, and not its conformity to the liturgical forms of any particular place or period. It may be that a form of worship that is most useful under certain conditions is not the best form under other conditions. Luther himself recognized this. When he offered to the Protestant Church of Germany its first liturgy, he held closely to the established liturgical tradition of Rome; but he insisted that the content of the form of service should be evangelical. But as the Reformation developed, his *Formula Missæ* of 1523 gave place to his *Deutsche Messe* of 1526, which lacked certain Roman Catholic elements that he still retained in 1523. Later developments resulted in great liturgical variation in the Lutheran Church. State Churches, and even individual congregations, were free to establish such liturgical forms as they thought were best suited to promote worship. And they exercised their Lutheran liberty. Accordingly, any given liturgical form is or should be determined by the needs of the worshiping congregation. A liturgy should be the natural expression of believers worshiping their God.

Back of this almost endless variety of Lutheran liturgies that have sprung up during the intervening centuries, there is the Lutheran principle that the Church must distinguish between things that are necessary and essential for Christianity

and things that are adiaphorous or indifferent. The great central truths are necessary, but there are a large number of usages and conventions of the Church that are not necessary in the form in which they exist. Among these are such things as the form of organization of the Church (there is no distinctive Lutheran form), the form of service, the architectural arrangement, etc. We can understand this Lutheran distinction best by studying the working of this principle in concrete illustrations.

The congregations that came over from the Roman Catholic Church continued to worship in the churches where they had assembled as good Catholics. That division of the Protestant movement known as the Reformed Church was radical in making changes in the form of service and in church decorations. Luther aimed to effect the necessary changes with the least disturbance possible. He tolerated the architectural arrangement of the churches that had been devised by Roman Catholics as best adapted to their form of service, which centered in the sacrifice of the mass; the altar was in the center and the pulpit to one side. This is æsthetically effective; it is much superior to the ugly confusion that is found in many churches. If it is the best arrangement for promoting worship in a particular congregation it should be retained; if some other arrangement serves this purpose better it should be used. Church architecture is an adiaphoron.

The same is true concerning forms and ceremonies. Some years ago one of our clergymen was vigorously expressing his opposition to certain elements in the Common Service that many of our best liturgical scholars consider Roman Catholic, such as the Confiteor and the Introit.[8] He declared that we ought to ban from Lutheran pulpits any preacher who insisted on using these Roman Catholic survivals. At the same synodical meeting another clergyman declared that

[8] The so-called "Common Service" contains the liturgical forms of worship officially adopted by the United Lutheran Church in America.—EDITOR.

we ought to require every congregation to use the Common Service exactly as directed in the rubrics. Neither one was Lutheran; they treated a form of service, which is an adiaphoron, as if it were essential and necessary. If the Common Service is the best order of service for promoting worship in a given congregation or in a group of congregations, the Lutheran teaching concerning adiaphora clearly indicates that it should be used. If some other liturgical form serves the purpose better it should be used for the same reason. According to Lutheranism, the use of a particular liturgy has its sole justification in its effectiveness in promoting a devout spirit in the worshiper. Worship is spontaneous; the reaching out of the believing soul toward God. If undirected there is likely to be confusion that interferes with worship. A liturgy is man's device to avoid such confusion; it should guide and inspire but not hamper this spontaneity of worship. For practically the same reasons the Lutheran Church has no distinctive form of organization; that form should be adopted which best serves the Church, whether Episcopal, Congregational, or some other form.

The Lutheran Church offers present-day Protestantism a sane and workable liturgical principle. It is adapted to all times and conditions. It makes the preaching of the Gospel the central element of the service in the Church. It recognizes the necessity of order in conducting public worship, but leaves a congregation free to use such ceremonies and forms as are most useful in promoting the spiritual life. During recent decades many non-liturgical Churches have recognized the necessity of orderly, dignified worship. In a number of instances the use of liturgical forms has been inaugurated. But in almost all cases this liturgical development has been without a guiding principle. Our sister denominations can profit much from Lutheran principles of worship.

The above distinction between things that are necessary and fundamental and things that are indifferent, and the Lutheran doctrine of the God-wrought freedom of the Chris-

tian man, developed in the early Lutheran Church a spirit of liberty. Within the large framework of truths fundamental to the Christian religion, which are necessary and binding, there was developed a freedom of thought that characterized the Lutheran Church. Enforced uniformity in things adiaphorous and in peripheral doctrines was resented. Lutheran liberty was a fact. Later development of doctrine in the traditional theology of the Church became a fetter—a Procrustean bed that in some instances prevented theological development; our inheritance became our prison house. But somewhat after Frank: "We should know ourselves at home in our church, not as slaves, who are servilely bound to the confessions . . . but as free and willing sons, who know the meaning of our fathers and feel ourselves inwardly at one with them." The Lutheran spirit of freedom combines a reverential and intelligent apprehension of our theological inheritance with an independence of thought that results in the adaptation of "our peculiar type of Christianity" to the religious problems of to-day.

What is Lutheranism? Should it continue as a distinct denomination to-day? In a time of confusion it has a definite and clear gospel message and a doctrinal position that is well defined confessionally. To an age that has lost or is hazy concerning its sense of sin and guilt, it offers a doctrine of sin that lays bare its very foundation in the estranged human heart. To those who do not take sin seriously, and consequently conceive salvation as reform rather than as redemption, it brings an interpretation of salvation in terms of the establishment of a right relation between God and man. To those who conceive Jesus as something less than God manifest in the flesh, the Redeemer from sin's guilt and power, it presents Christ as the divine object of religious faith, the Bringer of salvation. It conceives religion as man's relation to God and morality as the outward expression of the changed life. Lutheranism is positive and not negative. It avoids the superficiality of much of the religious thinking

of to-day. It seeks to know and to present the heart of Christianity. It also offers to American Protestantism a liturgical theory that will serve the Church in any age.

Though it is true that other Churches to a certain degree hold and preach the same doctrines, no other denomination of influence presents the great fundamental Christian truths with the same consistency and unanimity that we find in the Lutheran Church. It has a message to the Church of the twentieth century. If it proclaims this message in its purity, adapted to meet the problem of the age in which we live, it will render a distinct service to the Christian Church. If the Lutheran Church should lose its identity, Protestantism would be poorer; Christianity would suffer a distinct loss.

WHAT IS LUTHERANISM?

VII

MELANCHTHON G. G. SCHERER

[Dr. M. G. G. Scherer is one of Lutheran America's most distinguished Church statesmen. For years he has held a commanding position in the institutional life of Lutheranism in America. In more ways than one, moreover, it can be said that he fully represents the Lutheranism of the South, for he carries with him not only a staunch Lutheran tradition through his family connections (he is a son, grandson, nephew, and brother of Lutheran clergymen, etc.), but also through a long and ripened experience gained in a variety of official relationships, of a Southern setting.

He was born in the stirring year of 1861, on March 16, in Catawba County, North Carolina. He is a graduate of Roanoke College, Salem, Virginia; A.B., 1881; M.A., 1886, and an honorary Doctor of Divinity, 1903. Ordained by the Synod of Virginia in 1883, he has from time to time had connections with four other Lutheran synods, Maryland, West Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and now the Synod and Ministerium of South Carolina. From 1896 to 1899 he was President of North Carolina College, Mount Pleasant, North Carolina, and, from 1901 to 1904, professor in the Southern Lutheran Theological Seminary.

Dr. Scherer was President of the United Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South (a large and formidable organization which dated back to Civil War days) at the time when the great merger plans were being effected for a United Lutheran Church in America (1914-1918). He was a leading figure in this movement, serving on the Joint Ways and Means Committee in conference with the General Synod and the General Council, and a member of the Joint Committee which prepared the constitution of the new body. Upon its organization in 1918 Dr. Scherer became its first General Secretary, which position he continues to hold with marked distinction.

Recognition of his extraordinary talents for leadership and wise counsel has brought to him, time and again, appointments to the highest positions of trust in the church. For many years he has been a member of the Board of Directors of Newberry College, South

Carolina, and of the Southern Lutheran Theological Seminary; a member of the Executive Board of the United Lutheran Church in America, serving also on its Common Service Book Committee and as its Commissioner to the National Lutheran Council. He is a member of the Editorial Committee of the *Lutheran World Almanac and Encyclopedia;* and as a member of the American Bible Society serves on its Versions Committee. He was made delegate to the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work at Stockholm in 1925, and to the World Conference on Faith and Order at Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1927, where he gave one of the principal addresses on "The Ministry of the Church." He holds membership on the Continuation Committee of this movement.

For years he has been an indefatigable worker for the cause of Lutheran Church unity. He has espoused this cause with a forceful pen in the press and upon the public platform and notably in his recent lectures before the School for Pastors, at the Southern Lutheran Theological Seminary (1929). The next step toward Christian unity, he insists, is for those divisions of the Church which are most nearly alike in doctrine and in practice to strive to come together.—*The Editor.*]

There are at least two ways of conceiving Lutheranism; what it is as set forth in the language of the confessions, and what it is when translated into human experience. In other words, it may be thought of both subjectively and objectively. It may be considered also in relation to other forms of Christianity, and to life in its social, moral, political and cultural developments.

As an Experience

Our first task will be to show, as well as we can, what Lutheranism is as an experience in religion.

The thought here will be directed to its motions in the heart rather than to the formulas which are used to facilitate the intellectual comprehension and statement of it. Fundamentally it is of the heart and conscience, not in the sense that it springs naturally out of the heart, but in the sense that in the heart of man, that is in his deepest spiritual being, it is born a living, moving power. It is born there a living

spiritual reality with divers manifestations in consciousness. So it was with Luther himself, and so it is with all who really know Lutheranism, though the inward spiritual motions vary according to its working in different individuals.

The foregoing paragraph and all that follows in this section would be true also, according to the writer's view, if said of Christianity conceived of as an experience in the heart. Lutheranism, we believe, is Christianity; though we would not say that Christianity is Lutheranism, meaning thereby that to be a Christian one must be a Lutheran. We do believe, however, that in Lutheranism there is a deeper, truer insight into and a firmer grasp of essential Christianity than can be found in any conception and acceptation of the Christian religion conflicting with that which it has been given us to know.

When we try to show what Lutheranism is as an experience in the heart of man it must be said, first of all, that it has much that is common to the experience of all Christians. With the early Church and with that of the Middle Ages it knows God in "three Persons of the same essence and power, who also are coeternal, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost" and that these three are one Divine Essence.[1] It knows sin and forgiveness, and their effect in the heart, which likewise all Christians know in their way.

Yet there is a difference. The difference may not always be found in words. The Romanist, the Zwinglian and the Calvinist may use often the same words that Lutheranism does, so that there may not seem to be any difference. To find a difference, one must look deeper than the form of words. He must follow the thought that the words plainly convey, and see whether the thought is maintained throughout, in all places where it should be expected to stand inviolate. In this way there may be found many an illustration of the words: *Quum duo idem dicunt, non est idem.* Indeed, it may be found that what one and the same person

[1] Augsburg Confession, Art. I.

says without qualification at one place and with one purpose in view, he either contradicts in another relation or says it with limitations which damage the thought.

We may now proceed with our attempt to show what Lutheranism is as an experience in response to several of the religious conceptions which are elemental in it and to which it reacts as to stimuli—what it is as a living, working thing in hearts. Of course we are thinking of Lutheranism now at its conceivable best.

1. It is a wondering, adoring prostration of the whole personality at the feet of Jesus Christ, with an overwhelming sense of the Mystery that He is and of the largess He bestows. It is an experience like that of Simon Peter, when to the revealing question of Jesus he gave answer, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"; or like that of Thomas, when he exclaimed, "My Lord, and my God." It is the affirmative response of the soul to the revelation which Christ makes of Himself to the eye of faith. It is nothing less than the consciousness of the Divine Presence and Power, God manifest in the flesh, when Christ is the Object of thought or meditation. It reverently bows before Him; it worships Him; to Him it hearkens as unto God.

When Lutheranism holds possession of the heart this is its normal response to Christ wherever it finds Him; wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in the manger, conversing with the doctors in the temple, working in the carpenter shop at Nazareth, walking by the river Jordan, enduring temptation, preaching and teaching, healing and comforting, on the Mount of Transfiguration, dying upon the cross, rising from the dead, sitting at the right hand of God, in Word and in Sacrament, in the command that shows His way for us, and in the promise that cheers the feet of the obedient here and gilds and glorifies the future—Emmanuel.

2. When Lutheranism is at home and living in the heart, it manifests itself there at times predominantly as an experience of sin. This experience is always native to the heart

wherein lives Lutheranism. No one can be a Lutheran at heart and say, "I am without sin." That would be equivalent almost to blasphemy.

The sense of sin is not equally acute in all; nor is it at all times equally disturbing in one and the same individual. Likewise the effects which accompany, or proceed from the experience of sin, vary in degree; they may range all the way from a simple sense of unworthiness in the sight of God to the most bitter pangs of an accusing conscience whose accusations are known to be all too true. But always Lutheranism, if living within the heart, keeps awaking there the charge, Sinner! Sinner! It would seem at times that its intent is only to drive to remorse and despair, to kill. But not so! It has quite another aim.

3. Lutheranism in the heart saves from despair. It leads to repentance—"repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." The heart turns to God in sorrow for sin, and at the same time it draws near to Him in confidence, believing that He is gracious, even as He shows Himself to be in Christ Jesus, of whom it has learned that "a bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench"; in His name it trusts, ever and only, and to Him alone it looks for righteousness before God. In Lutheranism sin is experienced as a reality; it requires reality also to oppose to sin, and this it finds in Christ.

4. Where Lutheranism has in the heart its full and healthy life, and does its work there whole and entire, it yields the blessed experience of forgiveness of sins. The heart knows God as a Father merciful and gracious, and is just as sure of forgiveness as it is conscious of sin. It is a paradoxical experience—the heart ever crying out in confession of sin, yet rejoicing in full forgiveness and in a righteousness which covers all, the righteousness of Christ. This is the very heart of Lutheranism.

5. Moreover, the heart knows God in Jesus Christ not only as Creator-God but as God Incarnate, God manifest in the

flesh; it has a God who knows and understands it not only as its Creator but also as Partaker of the human nature, possessor of a human heart, who accordingly knows by experience the power of temptation, who has overcome and is able to succor them that are tempted.

6. The heart thus instructed and comforted has altogether a new attitude toward God. It rejoices in His goodness, and worships Him in spirit and in truth. It offers to Him spiritual sacrifices—the sacrifices of prayer, praise and thanksgiving. It has new desires and aversions—aversion to whatsoever is displeasing to God and desire toward all that is good and well pleasing in His sight. These new motions it recognizes as the fruit of the Spirit. They remain, however, throughout life, weak and imperfect. The evil inclinations continue; they are never completely silenced and put out of the life. Between the new and the old there is a constant struggle.

The aversion to the temptations of the flesh, the world and the devil does not always amount to hatred and revulsion. Often these things appeal very strongly, and they seem not hideous but innocent and harmless, so that resistance becomes hard and yielding easy. At times the fires upon the altar of the heart burn low; its spiritual outgoings toward God are sluggish; prayer and praise become dull and heavy; the joy of salvation languishes or fails; despondency broods over the heart and the temptation comes to give up all further effort.

But the heart that knows its Lutheran heritage—the teaching it has received in the Church—even in this extremity has still a Refuge. Within is the "still small voice" which says: Trust thou in God; all thine own righteousness is as naught; it cannot save thee; but the righteousness which God gives thee in Christ is complete, without fault or flaw; and it is thine to take freely and to rejoice in as thine own.

It is the Gospel that speaks; and if the heart gives heed to this voice and by faith takes refuge in Christ, it rises again

out of its gloom and resumes the Godward life. It returns to the conflict. Again and again it betakes itself to prayer and communion with God. The world with all its vexations and delusions is shut out and the soul speaks with the Eternal of things eternal. It holds fellowship with God and "in the secret place of the most High" it is renewed in strength. It gets new power—power to go on believing and to continue in the strife, to grow and increase in strength to battle more mightily against sin and to win the way to final victory. The fires of love are rekindled in the heart; it loves God; it seeks more diligently to dwell in Him, and finds its chief delight in doing His will. It goes out in love toward all mankind which moves always to fresh deeds of love; and the life becomes ever more Christlike. Yet its trust is in Christ alone, and not in its own moods and attainments. It knows that these are imperfect, and that it is accepted only in Christ the beloved Son of God.

7. The piety which Lutheranism produces is quite naturally characterized by a spirit of humility; it is not boastful. Yet, neither is it morose and servile; it is joyous and confident. It receives all of God's good gifts with thanksgiving, and uses them as the Father's gifts without abusing them and with a good conscience. In it there is the ever-present sense of sin which, like a minor chord, softens and subdues the music of life, but faith in the heart triumphs over this also, as well as over all adversity, and leaves the chambers of the soul resounding with the high note of joy. It is like the joy which steals into the heart of the little child when for its wrong-doing the chastening hand has been laid upon it and then, through its tears, it sees the parents' love and is happy. How simply and beautifully has Luther portrayed this quality of true Christian piety, even in the directions which he gave for the guidance of the faithful in their private devotions morning and evening. At the close of the form for Morning Prayer found in his Little Catechism he gives this direction: "And then thou shalt go *with joy* to thy work." Similarly,

at the end of the Evening Prayer he says: "Then thou shouldst go to sleep *immediately* and *joyfully*."

These experiences of which we have spoken are not only the normal experiences which Lutheranism should be expected to produce. They are those which have and do come from it. There is everything in it to produce them and nothing to work to the contrary. They are experiences of faith, all of them; and faith reaches further than we can see, embraces far more than the mind can understand, and lays hold on things not seen.

Thus, where Lutheranism has sway in the heart it produces there the record, the diary so to speak, of the soul on its way to God in Christ. There are many blots; sometimes the day is darkened by lapses into sin and exhibitions of unfaithfulness to duty; but the weaknesses and failures are confessed and lamented, the soul cries out unto the Lord and is helped, so that it proceeds joyously on its way; and in the end Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, reigns, and in His light the evening time is fair and fear vanishes away.

As an Expression of the Christian Faith

We must now undertake to show what Lutheranism is as an expression of the Christian faith.

Lutheranism, objectively considered, is fundamentally a form of teaching. This is evident from its fundamental Confession, the first article of which begins with the words: "Our Churches, with common consent, do teach." The second, third, fourth, sixth, seventh and seventeenth begin with the formula: "Also they teach." The fourth sets forth the teaching as to how men are justified before God, namely, "for Christ's sake through faith"; and the fifth shows how it is made possible for us to obtain this faith in these words: "That we may obtain this faith, the Office of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted." The eighth article does not contain the word "teach" but states theoretically that "it is lawful to use the Sacraments,

which are administered by evil men," since "both the Sacraments and Word are effectual by reason of the institution and commandment of Christ." All of the other "Chief Articles" state what "they teach" or "have taught" concerning the several articles of belief. In nearly all of the articles concerning "Abuses" are found such phrases as the following: "It is taught on our part," "it is taught," "our people are taught," "our teachers."

That Lutheranism is a form of teaching is likewise evident from Luther's Small Catechism, which he calls in the Preface a "Statement of the Christian doctrine." Also he prefixed to each of the *Five Parts* the words: "In the plain form in which it is to be taught by the Head of a Family."

The proposition that Lutheranism is a form of teaching is abundantly supported also by the other Confessional writings, particularly the Formula of Concord (Epitome) in which there is the frequently recurring formula, "We believe, teach and confess."

Lutheranism is distinctly and solely a teaching of religion. It is not philosophy; it is not science or history; and it has nothing to do with these, only in so far as they trespass upon its reserves or lend their aid to the establishment and comprehension of its truth. It is a teaching of truth that is not grasped by philosophy or science, and that does not proceed from history, but is revealed from heaven.

Essentially, it is not a new teaching; and was not new [2] at the time of the Reformation only in regard to certain abuses which were new,[3] and which had "crept into the Church without rightful authority." [4] It was really the old teaching of Apostles and Evangelists, of the early period of the Church, and of the purest and best teachers throughout the centuries. The signers and adherents of the Augsburg Confession desired "that it might be understood that, in doc-

[2] See Book of Concord, Jacobs (People's Edition), 78:15; 83:50, 51; 162:6; 533:2, and numerous other places.

[3] *Ibid.*, 66:72.

[4] See the Conclusion to the first part of the Augsburg Confession and the introductory paragraph to the second part.

trine and ceremonies, nothing has been received on our part, against Scripture or the Church Catholic, since it is manifest that we have taken most diligent care that no new and ungodly doctrine should creep into our churches." [5] They also appealed constantly to the recognized teachers of the preceding ages and to the Canons of the Church, as may be sufficiently seen by reading the confessions.

The teaching of Lutheranism takes in a very wide scope. In the sphere of religion it has an eye to everything that has ever been said or written on the subject, and a mind toward every question that has ever been raised, every decision that has been reached, and everything that is done in the name of religion. This is not to say that it has expressed itself definitely and specifically on all points; but that its principles, its articles of faith, provide it with a *locum standi,* from which it may view every teaching and know its own position in regard to it. It holds some things which, in so far as it is concerned, are settled and fixed, from which it cannot depart and maintain its true character, and for which it must contend if it would stand true to itself and to its Lord. Its teaching, therefore, takes the form of theses and antitheses, of affirmations and denials. It is the friend and champion of all truth, so far as it knows it, and the enemy of all error; and all out of love, for if hatred and wrath be in the heart, and move one against his neighbor, it is contrary to the spirit and teaching of Lutheranism.

In order to understand Lutheranism as an expression of the Christian faith it is necessary to study and weigh the articles of its faith, which, as we have seen, are also articles of teaching.

As we enter upon this study we are impressed by the fact that there is no article in the Augsburg Confession (1530) which purports to define the authoritative source from which alone the things to be believed and taught are to be derived. The Confession lays down no rule indicating the sole source from which articles of faith are to be drawn, or by which

[5] Conclusion to the Augsburg Confession.

they are to be judged. We come upon something of this kind first in the Smalcald Articles (1537) where Luther said: "It is of no consequence that articles of faith are framed from the works or words of the holy Fathers. . . . We have another rule, *viz.,* that the Word of God should frame articles of faith; otherwise no one, not even an angel." [6] This concerns more particularly the source, and allows no other but the Word of God. Then, in the Introduction to the Formula of Concord (1577), we find this confessional declaration which is quite in accord with that just cited: "We believe, teach and confess that the only rule and standard according to which at once all dogmas and teachers should be esteemed and judged are nothing else than the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament." This, it will be noted, conceives of the Holy Scriptures as providing the criterion for determining the truth or falsity of doctrines, whatever their source. The principle here stated, though not formally laid down in the Augsburg Confession as an article of faith and teaching, was nevertheless fully recognized and applied in the formation of that document. Ever since the Leipzig Disputation (1519), when Luther, against Eck, appealed to the Scriptures as an authority above that of Councils, the principle of the sole authority of the Scriptures in regard to what is to be received as an article of faith, and what not, had gained ground and had become firmly established long before the Diet of Augsburg. Hence, in the preparation of the Augsburg Confession it was taken for granted and made use of and did not need to be stated as an article of the faith and teaching. Moreover, the authority of Scripture had not been denied, though tradition was held to have equal authority.[7]

[6] Smalcald Articles, Part II, Art. II.

[7] There are also other doctrines of the Christian religion concerning which it was not thought necessary to frame articles, since they were accepted by all and were not then in dispute in the Church; such, for example, were the doctrine of the fall of man, and that of a divine revelation through the written Word of God. These are likewise taken for granted.

Another fact must be emphasized here on account of its significance for a correct understanding and appraisement of Lutheranism as an expression of the Christian faith. This fact is that Lutheranism did not undertake to originate things in religion. It did not have to do so. It did not have to originate a Church; the Church was there; nor a sacred book as an authority for its teachings as did Mohammedanism, Mormonism, Christian Science; the Scriptures were there; nor Sacraments; the Sacraments were there. It did have to choose between different conceptions of the Church which were already familiar to students of the Christian religion. It had to choose between authorities; that is, between the authority of the Church with its Councils and traditions and the authority of the Holy Scriptures. And it had to choose between sacraments and conceptions of sacraments. Likewise, it did not have to originate the elements of the faith or topics, concerning which articles of faith were to be drawn up; the elements were there and had been known and discussed throughout the ages, from Paul on down. It had the three Ecumenical Creeds of ancient origin; the Apostles', the Nicene and the Athanasian, all of which it accepted. In them are found the elements or topics for most of the chief articles of the Christian faith, or at least the seed thoughts out of which they grow. On many points they did not contain full and adequate statements of the faith. Hence, in the development of doctrines in the Church various and conflicting views had arisen, some of them antedating the creeds themselves; and Lutheranism had to choose between conflicting views on many subjects. It did not reject the religion of Christ nor any of its elements. It held on to all of them. Lutheranism is a reformation not a revolution. It rejects nothing simply to show disagreement with Roman Catholicism. Wherever the Church of Rome teaches truly according to the Scriptures, Lutheranism teaches the same thing. And there are many points of agreement. It is only where the Church of Rome has erred, whether before or since the Reformation, whether

in authoritative statement or otherwise, that Lutheranism teaches differently; and here, likewise, the points of disagreement are numerous and fundamental. There are also many disagreements with others who have clashed with Rome along the way, in ancient, medieval and modern times, but who have been led by a different genius in whole or in part.

From the following attempt at a brief exposition of what Lutheranism is, as an expression of the Christian faith, it is the writer's hope that the intelligent reader, whether Roman Catholic or non-Lutheran dissenter from Romanism, may be able to see in how far he agrees and in how far he disagrees with Lutheran teaching. There will be little or no effort to prove the positions of Lutheranism, but only to state them as briefly as possible without elaboration. And while it will not be possible even to state what Lutheranism has to say with regard to each and every development in religious thought, or upon every topic that is or may be embraced in it, the attempt will be to give the principal articles and especially those which show how it works its way in every question at issue.

1. Concerning God, Lutheranism teaches that "there is one Divine Essence, which is called and which is God: eternal, without body, without parts, of infinite power, wisdom and goodness, the Maker and Preserver of all things, visible and invisible; and yet that there are three Persons, of the same essence and power, who also are coeternal, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost." [8] In other words, it teaches what is commonly called the doctrine of the Trinity, and that Christians are to worship the one God, "the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity." [9] It is a great mystery. It is not new. It was taught and is taught by Rome. Lutheranism does not esteem it less because Rome teaches it; neither does it teach it because Rome teaches it, but because it

[8] A. C., Art. I.
[9] The Athanasian Creed, paragraphs 3 and 25.

believes that the doctrine has "in Holy Scripture sure and firm testimonies that cannot be overthrown." [10]

2. Concerning man in his relation to God Lutheranism teaches "that since the Fall [11] of Adam, all men, begotten according to nature, are born with sin, that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with concupiscence; and that this disease, or vice of origin is truly sin, even now condemning and bringing eternal death upon those not born again through baptism and the Holy Ghost." [12]

This article includes all under sin, Christ the Immaculate Son of God alone being excepted.

From this sin and its consequences man cannot save, or begin to save himself, any more than he can from his actual sins. Salvation must come from God.

3. Accordingly, "the Word, that is, the Son of God, did take man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, so that there are Two Natures, the divine and the human, inseparably conjoined in one Person, one Christ, true God and true man, who was born of the Virgin Mary, truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, that he might reconcile the Father unto us, and be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but for all actual sins of men." "He also descended into hell, and truly rose again the third day"; afterwards he ascended to the right hand of the Father, there to reign, and to "sanctify them that believe in Him, by sending the Holy Ghost into their hearts." [13]

The Christian religion centers here, in the Incarnate Son of God; and Lutheranism can endure nothing that tends to obscure or detract from the power and the glory of Christ as Mediator.

4. Concerning justification or righteousness before God, Lutheranism teaches "that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits or works, but are freely justified for Christ's sake through faith, when they believe that they

[10] Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article I.
[11] See note on page 152. [12] A. C., Art. II. [13] A. C., Art. III.

are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who, by his death, hath made satisfaction for our sins. This faith God imputes for righteousness in his sight."

This article excludes the possibility that men should attain to justification, or righteousness before God, by their own powers or on account of any merits or works of theirs. The sole ground of justification is the power and work of Christ, "Who, by His death, hath made satisfaction for our sins." Sinful men are "freely justified for Christ's sake."

This is done "through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor," that is, that God is reconciled and gracious to them, "and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake." "This faith God imputes for righteousness in his sight." Nothing else is needed that they may be accounted righteous before God. This is what Lutheranism means when it insists that men are justified by faith alone.

Furthermore, Christ is Mediator and remains Mediator; so that we ought always to believe and "be confident that for his sake we have a reconciled God, even though we are unworthy." [14]

All of this presupposes, of course, the knowledge of sin and a contrite heart on account of it; which is the work of the law, and which prepares the way for the promise of the Gospel whereby faith comes.

This doctrine of justification by faith alone gives all the glory of salvation to Christ, and to the soul the only ground that it can have for complete assurance and comfort, and confidence toward God. Nothing can take the place of faith in Christ, or be joined with it in the matter of justification,[15] since forgiveness of sins is all for His sake and can be received only through faith. It is important to know the true meaning of the word "faith" as it is used here and everywhere in the teaching on justification. It is employed not as

[14] Apology, Chap. III. See Book of Concord, page 111:42.
[15] A. C., Art. XX.

denoting simply that frame of mind which credits the story of Christ as presented in the New Testament; but that trust and confidence, which receiving and relying upon Him and His saving work, receives also assuredly the forgiveness of sins which God freely gives for His sake. "Men are admonished that the term 'faith' doth not signify merely the knowledge of the history, such as is in the ungodly and in the devil, but signifieth a faith which believes not merely the history but also the effect of the history—namely, this article of the forgiveness of sins, to wit, that we have grace, righteousness and forgiveness of sins through Christ." [16]

This doctrine of justification by faith reappears in many articles of the Confession [17] and imparts its force and value to all of them. To the whole system of Lutheran teaching it is what the keystone is to the arch. In the confessions it is repeatedly declared to be the chief article in the Christian doctrine. Here, if anywhere, we find the genius of Lutheranism. The Lutherans in China, with keen penetration, call their Church *Sin Yi Hui,* which means "The Church in which justification before God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ is preached." [18]

Here, also, Lutheranism is uncompromising.

5. Lutheranism teaches that the faith through which men receive the forgiveness of their sins and are justified is a gift of God, and that it comes through means instituted by God Himself for that purpose. "That we may obtain this faith, the Office (*ministerium*) of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments (*tanquam per instrumenta*), the Holy Ghost is given, who worketh faith where and when it pleaseth God in them that hear the Gospel." [19] This may be cast into the form of a syllogism as

[16] A. C., Art. XX.

[17] See especially Articles V, VI, XII, XIII, XV, XX, XXIV, XXV, XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII.

[18] Dr. C. J. Voskamp, in Minutes of the United Lutheran Church (1926), page 23.

[19] A. C., Art. V.

follows: God the Holy Ghost, who worketh faith, is given through the Word and Sacraments as through means (instruments); but that men may have the means, *i.e.*, may hear the Word of the Gospel and receive the sacraments, these must be brought and given to them; for this purpose God instituted the ministry or office of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments.

This doctrine, that the Word and the Sacraments are the means through which the Holy Ghost and faith and all gifts of grace do come is frequently repeated throughout the Confessions. Therefore, the Word and Sacraments are also called the Means of Grace.

In the foregoing paragraphs "the Word" refers more particularly to the spoken word as in teaching and preaching, though not to the exclusion of the written Word. The Sacraments are means of grace only on account of the Word which is the chief thing in them. Accordingly, we read in the Apology[20] that

> God at the same time, by the Word and by rites,[21] moves hearts to believe and conceive faith, just as Paul says (Rom. 10:17): "Faith cometh by hearing." But just as the Word enters the ears in order to strike hearts; so the rite itself meets the eyes, in order to move hearts. The effect of the Word and of the rite is the same, as it has been well said by Augustine that a sacrament is "a visible word," because the rite is received by the eyes, and is, as it were, a picture of the Word, signifying the same thing as the Word. Wherefore the effect of both is the same.

This, however, is not the whole of the teaching concerning the Sacraments, as we shall see later.

We have now seen what Lutheranism teaches, in regard to the Holy Scriptures as the only authoritative source of faith

[20] Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Chap. VII, Art. XIII.
[21] The Sacraments.

and teaching; also in regard to the Word as means of grace. It seems right and proper at this place, although it involves a slight digression, to say a few words about what is taught in regard to revelation. Here, also, it must be said that there is no article devoted particularly to this subject. There was no special need of one. That God had revealed Himself not only through the works of His hands but also through the speech and writings of chosen men, and above all in His Son Jesus Christ, had been the common faith of the Church in all ages. This faith, also, Lutheranism inherited, and cherishes it as one of its most precious possessions. The prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament are the record of that revelation, and they alone. They are the written Word of God. Hence "the Holy Scriptures alone remain the only judge, rule and standard, according to which, as the only test-stone, all dogmas should and must be discerned and judged." [22] Hence, also, they are repeatedly referred to in the Formula of Concord as " the revealed Word of God." On this point Lutheranism cannot waver and still stand its ground.

Since, at the beginning of this section, we have spoken of the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments, in order that men may obtain faith, it seems proper that we should also say a little more on the teaching of Lutheranism in regard to the ministry of the Church. Essentially, it is an office only, whose proper function is confined to the teaching of the Gospel and administering the Sacraments. It is not a priesthood that offers sacrifices for the sins of the people, or that repeats the one sacrifice offered by Christ upon the cross. That was offered once for all, and is sufficient for the sins of all men to the end of time. Hence, the work of the ministry is not to offer sacrifices, but to bring and give to men the means whereby the Holy Spirit works in them faith in that one sacrifice of Christ, that thus they may obtain forgiveness of sins and justification of righteous-

[22] Introduction to the Formula of Concord, Epitome.

ness before God. This makes orders, or grades in the ministry, unnecessary. If anywhere orders are established or retained they are accounted only as distinctions instituted by man; and however highly they may be regarded for historic reasons they cannot be held as being necessary to the work of the ministry, which is the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Whether the Church shall have an episcopal, a presbyteral or a congregational ministry has not been determined by the Word of God nor by any manifest decision of the Apostles, or practice of the Church, in the earliest times. So far as it is possible to discover the facts, the Church acted freely in this matter. In Lutheranism there is no confessional principle that rejects episcopacy *per se,* or that sets up any other form of ministry as necessary. Lutheranism believes and teaches that, since there is no express command of God in this matter the Church is free, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to determine its polity according to the circumstances and requirements of time and place, insisting always upon the function of the ministry as above stated. It teaches also "that no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments, unless he be regularly (*rite*) called." [23]

6. Concerning Christian deportment in all relations of life Lutheranism teaches "that this faith is bound to bring forth good fruits, and that it is necessary to do good works commanded by God, because of God's will, but not that we should rely on those works to merit justification before God." [24]

Those who through faith in Christ know that they have a gracious God and who have the Holy Spirit dwelling within their hearts "are renewed and endowed with new affections, so as to be able to bring forth good works." They are now able, though in great weakness it may be, to draw near to God, to call upon Him, to expect aid from Him and to do the things which He requires and which are pleasing to Him.

Whereas, "man's powers without the Holy Ghost are full

[23] A. C., Art. XIV. [24] A. C., Art. VI.

of ungodly affections, and are too weak to do works which are good in God's sight." [25] Such is man's feebleness when he is without faith and without the Holy Ghost that he can do no work that is good and pleasing unto God.

When by the grace of God we have been brought to that faith in Christ through which we receive forgiveness of sins and are justified, then we ought to conform our lives in all things to the will of God, according to His commandment, and thus, with loving, cheerful hearts, to thank, praise, serve and obey Him; also to love our neighbor and "do good to all men as we have opportunity."

We cannot truly love God, or love our neighbor as we ought, until we have within us a new heart, mind and spirit, which we receive with faith and the Holy Ghost. Then love begins to work freely in accord with its own nature, not wincingly on account of the command, but joyfully as delighting to please a loving gracious God. Then, also, love does right and more than right toward other men, and to all of God's creatures, by its own inner law. As we are forgiven freely we love and serve God freely, and do all that belongs to a godly life, though weakly and unworthily. Hence the need of daily repentance, which consists of contrition and faith.[26]

But Lutheranism teaches that we are to put no confidence in our works as meriting justification or that righteousness which makes us acceptable unto God. This is ours only through faith in Christ, of which the works are the necessary fruits.

7. It seems requisite that at least a brief presentation be made of what Lutheranism teaches in regard to the Church, particularly in view of the prominence into which this subject has been brought by recent movements for Church union.

> Also they teach that One Holy Church is to continue forever. The Church is the Congregation of Saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered. And to the true unity of the

[25] A. C., Art. XX. [26] A. C., Art. XII.

> Church, it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, rites,[27] or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike.[28]

Lutheranism recognizes the fact that while the Church, properly speaking, is "the congregation of saints and true believers," there are nevertheless mingled with it in this world "many hypocrites and evil persons," and teaches that "it is lawful to use the Sacraments, which are administered by evil men," maintaining that "both the Sacraments and the Word are effectual by reason of the institution and commandment of Christ, notwithstanding they be administered by evil men." [29]

The teaching in regard to these matters, as upon all others, rests upon no other foundation than the Word of God.

8. In regard to Baptism, Lutheranism teaches "that it is necessary to salvation, and that through baptism is offered the grace of God; and that children are to be baptized, who, being offered to God through baptism, are received into His grace." [30]

Baptism is necessary for us because it has been commanded by Christ. Therefore, "whoever rejects baptism rejects the Word of God, faith and Christ, who directs us to baptism and binds us thereto." [31] This is not to say, however, that He binds Himself thereto, so that He cannot save in the absence of the Sacrament. If one cannot avail himself of baptism "the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save"; but to say that that which He has commanded is unnecessary, and to reject it because reason cannot see how it can be of any value, is to set one's own reason up against God's Word.

Lutheranism teaches that baptism is effectual unto salva-

[27] Including ordination and Church government.
[28] A. C., Art. VII.
[29] A. C., Art. VIII.
[30] A. C., Art. IX.
[31] The Large Catechism.

tion through "the Word of God which accompanies and is connected with the water, and our faith, which relies on the Word of God connected with the water." [32] "By the Word such power is imparted to baptism that it is a laver of regeneration, as St. Paul also calls it (Tit. 3:5)." [33]

Little children are to be baptized since they have need of the grace of God, and the divine promise of grace and of the Holy Ghost pertains to them also, as well as to the adults. Through baptism the promise of salvation may be and is applied to them.[34]

9. Concerning the Lord's Supper, Lutheranism teaches "that the body and blood of Christ are truly present, and are distributed to those who eat in the Supper of the Lord." [35] To the same effect the words of the Small Catechism answer the question, What is the Sacrament of the Altar? "It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, given unto us Christians to eat and to drink, as it was instituted by Christ himself."

Christ's words are: "Take, eat: this is my body. Drink ye all of it: this cup is the new testament in my blood." And St. Paul says: "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" [36]

It does not say how the presence of the body and blood is effected; only that they are there, and that they are communicated to those who eat and drink in the Sacrament.

The presence is that of the living Christ,[37] who is God and man in one person, the two natures being forever inseparable.

Lutheranism receives the words of Christ "properly and as they sound, and understands the proposition, 'This is my body,' not as a figurative, but as an unusual expression." [38] And it insists, with Luther, that "it is the Word which makes and distinguishes this Sacrament, so that it is not mere bread

[32] The Small Catechism.
[33] The Large Catechism.
[34] Apology, Chap. IV, Art. IX.
[35] A. C., Art. X.
[36] II Cor. 10:16.
[37] Apology, Chap. IV, Art. X.
[38] Formula of Concord, Chap. VII. See Book of Concord, 608:38.

and wine, but is, and is properly called the body and blood of Christ." [39] "If you take away the Word, or regard it without the Word, you have nothing but mere bread and wine. But if the Word be added thereto, as it must be, then in virtue of the same it is truly the body and blood of Christ." [40]

In every article of its faith Lutheranism is consciously face to face with that which is above reason. Here also, in the Lord's Supper, it contemplates that which it recognizes to be an inexplicable mystery. It makes no attempt to explain it, not even in the words "in, with and under" the bread and wine. On account of the use of these forms, it has been charged with teaching impanation, consubstantiation, subpanation. These words were not intended to explain the mode of the presence of Christ's body and blood at all. They were used for the purpose of rejecting the doctrine of transsubstantiation,[41] by showing that the bread and wine remain bread and wine; and they have no other force. The charge of consubstantiation was read into the words by the opponents of Luther, as though it had been meant to explain by them how the presence of the body and blood of Christ is effected, or the mode of the presence. But while Lutheranism rejects transubstantiation by the use of these words, maintaining thereby that the bread and wine are not changed into the body and blood of Christ but remain unchanged, it does not go to the opposite extreme of teaching that the words of Christ, "This is my body," are to be understood in a figurative sense, thus denying the real presence of Christ in the Supper, but insists that His words are to be understood just as they sound.[42] It speaks of a "sacramental union" between the body and blood of Christ and the bread and wine; [43] but even this is no attempt at an explanation of the mode of the presence, or of how it is effected. When all has been said, this is left a profound mystery not to be explained, yet to be believed because of the Word who says it.

[39] Formula of Concord, Chap. VIII. See Book of Concord. 604:21.
[40] *Ibid.*, 605:23.
[41] *Ibid.*, 607:35.
[42] *Ibid.*, 608:38, quoted above.
[43] *Ibid.*, 607:38.

10. Concerning the proper use of the Sacraments Lutheranism teaches "that they were ordained, not only to be marks of profession among men, but rather to be signs and testimonies of the will of God toward us, instituted to awaken and confirm faith in those who use them. Wherefore we must so use the Sacraments that faith be added to believe the promises which are offered and set forth through the Sacraments." [44]

This pertains to both of the Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Here Lutheranism meets and rejects two very different conceptions regarding the purpose for which the Sacraments were instituted and the true and profitable use of them. This may be sufficiently illustrated by reference to the Lord's Supper.

(a) It was not instituted to be a mark or sign of profession or to "signify mutual union and friendship among Christians," [45] though incidentally it may and does in a measure serve these ends. In this way much more emphasis is laid upon what men do in the Sacrament than upon what God does. It is "rather a sign and testimony of the will of God toward us." It is a means of grace, whereby God actually imparts to us the grace of the Gospel, that is, the forgiveness of sins, when we believe the promise contained in the words, "given and shed for you for the remission of sins."

(b) The other conception which is here rejected is that according to which grace is conferred in the Sacrament *ex opere operato, sine bono motu utentis;* that is, on account of the work done, without a good disposition (*motu*) on the part of the one using it.

Over against both of these, Lutheranism teaches that "we must so use the Sacraments that faith be added to believe the promises which are offered and set forth through the Sacraments." While our faith does not make the Sacraments and the absence of it does not invalidate or take anything away from them, faith is necessary as that through

[44] A. C., Art. XIII. [45] Apology. See Book of Concord, 273:68.

which alone we can receive the promise given us in the Sacraments.

In Relation to Its Confessions

Sufficient has now been said of Lutheranism as an expression of the Christian faith. There are other articles in the Confession to which little or no reference has been made. It is not deemed necessary to speak of them in this presentation; some of them are included in the Apostles' Creed. Those that are not contain nothing differing materially from that which is commonly held among other historic communions which accepted the principles of the Reformation; or, they concern subjects to a proper understanding of which the article concerning justification should be a sufficient guide.

It is desirable, however, that something be said in regard to the relation of Lutheranism to its creeds and confessions. The declaration of the Formula of Concord, that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament "alone remain the only judge, rule and standard, according to which, as the only test-stone, all dogmas should and must be discerned and judged," [46] stands unquestioned to this day. The following statements of the Formula are likewise generally accepted as expressing a recognized principle of Lutheranism:

> Other writings, of ancient or modern teachers, whatever reputation they may have, should not be regarded as of equal authority with the Holy Scriptures, but should altogether be subordinated to them, and should not be received other or further than as witnesses, in what manner and at what places, since the time of the apostles, the (purer) doctrine of the prophets and apostles was preserved.[47]
>
> The other symbols and writings cited are not judges, as are the Holy Scriptures, but only a witness and declaration of the faith, as to how at any time the Holy

[46] Book of Concord, 492:7. [47] *Ibid.*, 491:2.

> Scriptures have been understood and explained in the articles in controversy in the Church of God by those who then lived, and how the opposite dogma was rejected and condemned.[48]

Lutheranism to-day maintains much the same attitude toward the Holy Scriptures; though most of the bodies in America, if not all of them, go a little further, perhaps, in what they say of them in the doctrinal bases which they have enunciated.

Likewise, Lutheranism in our time, as represented in the organized Churches which bear the name Lutheran, accepts the "symbols" [49] in much the same way as they were regarded then. It should be recognized, however, that in accepting them confessionally it makes them professedly "a witness and declaration of the faith" now, showing how the Lutheranism of this time understands and explains the Holy Scriptures.

In its understanding of what the Scriptures teach, Lutheranism has not changed. Hence it has not rejected its Confessions. But if it should find that its understanding of what Scripture teaches is wrong, in order to be true to its principle it would have to abandon or revise its Confession.

The Scriptures remain "the one judge, rule and standard," "the only test-stone" of the teaching concerning matters of faith and salvation. Lutheranism can never admit that it is wrong in this and still maintain its character as Lutheranism.

It should be added finally, that the several Lutheran bodies in America have ample provision in their Constitutions for the maintenance of pure doctrine in accordance with the Confessions, and that this is a matter of constant concern and

[48] Book of Concord, 492:8.

[49] The Creeds and Confessions; namely, the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed, also the distinctively Lutheran symbols, the Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Large and Small Catechisms of Luther, and the Formula of Concord. If any of the Lutheran symbols are not formally recognized by all of the Lutheran bodies, none of them is expressly rejected.

proper vigilance. Yet rare is a case of discipline, for seldom is there a serious departure from the faith of the Church. And this is to be attributed for the most part, not to a slavish adherence to confessional statement nor to intimidation, but to the fact that the teachings of the Church are Scriptural and commend themselves to the hearts and consciences of those who wish to proclaim that which the Lord has made known. In this is their freedom, and it is sufficient.

In Relation to Other Christian Communions

In thinking of its relations with other organized groups of Christians, Lutheranism takes into consideration first of all their doctrinal systems, their faith and their testimony. This follows inevitably from the deep concern it feels for the maintenance of a pure Gospel. When it studies other Communions in this regard it becomes evident that, while there are agreements in many respects, there are also very pronounced and significant differences; and that these differences affect the message of the Church to the world—the very Gospel itself, and the preaching of it, or the delivery of it to mankind. Hence, also, they affect the reception of the Gospel by men and their view of God in Christ.

These differences are too grave to be ignored or lightly treated. A detailed statement of them cannot be given here; but they would be found to gather around subjects such as the following: The Church—its Nature and proper Function; The Person of Christ; The Law and the Gospel; The Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; Justification, or the Righteousness of Faith before God.

The other communions recognize the differences, but they do not seem to think them important. With us they are important, so important and far-reaching, indeed, that we feel in conscience bound to maintain our separate identity, in order that we may not seem to compromise the truth for which we stand, and that we may freely exercise the right to give it our courageous and most effective support.

Yet there is a native bent among Lutherans for unity. They are not unionists, seeking to make the unity of the Church manifest in external organization, where real inner unity does not exist. They put unity in the faith first, and where that is found to exist the desire to unite finds expression in one organization upon a common confession or doctrinal basis.

In Relation to Life in This World

In the closing sections an attempt will be made to state briefly, yet in a comprehensive way, the principles which determine the attitude of Lutheranism toward the many problems, scientific, moral, political and social, which perplex and trouble the world to-day, and no less the Christian Church.

Lutheranism concerns itself primarily with the things which pertain to the Christian religion. Its thought is not directed toward the things which constitute the subject matter of the natural sciences, of politics or civil government, or of philosophy. These are not at all ignored; but it has other and higher things to think about. When we speak of higher things it is not, of course, spacial distances and relations that we have in mind, but ideal distinctions and valuations.

These higher things are not given in reason, nor are they brought within man's grasp by his own natural powers. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." The things of which we speak are not to be found in nature; not in matter, whether they be sought in the pleroma of the stellar world or in the atom and the electron. Biology does not give them. The study of man does not yield them, whether by the dissection of body or mind, or by the most exhaustive investigations into human history and political institutions from the beginning on down. Men may seek them, as they always have done; and they may make some approach to them, but they have never been able to come at them.

The Highest is God. How diligently have they sought!

But always at the end there has gone up the anguished cry: "Oh that I knew where I might find him! That I might come even to his seat." There is faith, which is "assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen"—evidently something which is not born of reason and is not explained by it. There is a righteousness, which exceeds all the powers of man, but which is essential to meet his needs and to satisfy the desires of the hungry soul. There is love—the love of God "which passeth knowledge," and that love which is born of it and which rejoices in God and goes out to all His creatures. There is hope, "a lively hope" which survives all disappointments and quietly awaits the fulfillment of the promise with full assurance. There is a peace "which passeth all understanding" and is indestructible by the eventualities of time. There is a joy which nothing on earth can give, and which no power of man can take away. There is a new life which men can know but cannot understand. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." There is the Holy Spirit; and the Church itself, "the congregation of saints and true believers," which is not an outward visible organization like worldly governments, but is the whole company of those who by faith are united to Christ the invisible Head. And finally, there is the Word, a Word which is unlike and far transcending any other Word that was ever delivered to man, a "Word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." These and such like things belong unmistakably to a higher realm than that which we speak of as Nature. They pertain to another order, which we are wont to call the Spiritual, the Eternal, the World to Come, not meaning thereby to relegate them to futurity but to distinguish them from the things which originate in and belong to the natural order, the world in which we now live. "Every true Christian is, even here upon earth, partaker of eternal blessings, even of eternal comfort, of eternal life, and of the Holy Ghost, and of

righteousness which is from God, until he shall be completely saved in the world to come." [50]

Lutheranism believes that in the writings of prophets and apostles, and above all in Jesus Christ, the eternal Logos, the Word made flesh, it possesses the revelation of God and of the world eternal. It affords even now in experience a foretaste of the things unseen, the heavenly reality that lies all about us and enfolds us. And it is this which it cherishes above all else, and with which it is chiefly concerned.

But the world in which we live is something quite different. It, too, has an order peculiarly its own. It embraces all that we include in the terms nature and history, though even into nature and history the Eternal also has found and finds still an entrance. This world, which we may call the Space-Time World, presents many things for the contemplation of Christians, as well as of other men, and to which Christians react in their own peculiar way; for they are, indeed, "a peculiar people" in the world, "a people for God's own possession."

Some of the things which belong to the course of this Space-Time World are evil, and they work injury and hurt throughout the Creation. To these evils Lutheranism is not indifferent. It does not submit passively and idly to them. It resists them, not with the weapons of man's warfare, but with "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." Its place and its spirit are with the Eternal Order, and it relies upon the means which are appropriate thereto. By the Word of God it supports all lawful government, because this also is ordained of God; but it refrains from politics. In all of its activities for the betterment of social conditions its chief reliance is the Word, teaching and admonishing against the evil, persuading to the life to which men are called through the Gospel, ministering help and comfort and counsel wherever there may be need. There are also many things in this Space-Time World which are good—types and

[50] Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Book of Concord, 164:15.

shadows of the good that is Eternal. In these Lutheranism rejoices, and uses them with a good conscience and a thankful heart. But even in these it does not live. Its citizenship is in heaven. It is in this world, entangled with it and much enfeebled by the entanglement; but its "life is hid with Christ in God." It believes that if Christianity is to survive it must be by reason of the stronger appeal of the Eternal.

In Relation to the New Knowledge

Men are naturally and properly prone to study the world in which they live. Abraham was told to lift up his eyes toward the stars, and the Psalmist said, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork." All things great and small, and all records and natural processes, have been subjected to the study and investigations of science. To reverent study on all lines Lutheranism is not hostile but friendly. It welcomes all new light, and is not terrified or confounded if some things in the Space-Time Order seem to be in conflict with that which has been revealed out of the Eternal. It has not been greatly disturbed by evolution; it has taken little part in the controversy between fundamentalism and modernism, because all of these questions belong to the world which is passing, and because it is sure that it will be found at last that they do not deprive it of those things which concern it most, the Eternal.

WHAT IS LUTHERANISM?

VIII

JOHN A. W. HAAS

[DR. HAAS is the highly honored Dean among the incumbent executive-heads of Lutheran colleges in America. His name is intimately linked with recent progressive developments in the program of higher education carried on by organized Lutheranism in this country. Possessed of intellectual vigor, wide experience, broad training and a grace of personality, he stands to-day in the very front rank of American Lutheran educators. He has done much to preserve for Lutheranism, through his fine leadership for more than a quarter of a century as President of Muhlenberg College, the dignity of intellectual integrity and Christian idealism that is its true heritage.

President Haas was born August 31, 1862, at Philadelphia. For sixteen years after his ordination by the Ministerium of Pennsylvania in 1887, he served with distinction as pastor within this Mother Synod of American Lutheranism. The impetus for scholarship which has characterized his whole career no doubt is to be found in his university training. He holds three degrees from the University of Pennsylvania: A.B., 1884; B.D. and M.A., 1887; with one year at the University of Leipzig, 1887-1888, and one year at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia. Exacting as have been his duties in his two pastorates and in his administrative work, he has sought and found time not only to keep abreast of theological and especially philosophical thought, but to add his own contributions in productions of real merit. In 1895 he published a "Commentary on the Gospel of Mark," which appeared in *The Lutheran Commentary;* in 1899 appeared the widely circulated *Lutheran Cyclopedia,* with which his name is linked as co-editor and contributor; in 1903 two books, *Bible Literature* and *Biblical Criticisms;* in 1915 his *Trends of Thought and Christian Truth* (perhaps his most notable book); then followed in quick succession, *In The Light of Faith,* 1922; *Freedom and Christian Conduct,* 1923; *Unity of Faith and Knowledge,* 1926; *Truth of Faith,* 1927; *Problems of the Christian State,* 1928; and, *What Ought I To Believe?* 1929.

Articles from his pen have appeared frequently in *The Lutheran Church Review.*

Many honors have come to President Haas. Thiel College conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1902. He is the recipient of the Doctor of Laws degree from three institutions: The University of Pennsylvania, 1914; Augustana College, 1917; and Gettysburg College, 1922. For three years, 1913-1916, he was the presiding officer of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania. In 1929 he represented the United Lutheran Church of America as delegate to the Lutheran World Convention at Copenhagen. He has represented Lutheranism from time to time as University Preacher at Harvard. He holds membership in many distinguished societies, notably Phi Beta Kappa and the Authors' Club of London.—*The Editor.*]

It is exceedingly important, and even necessary, in this twentieth century that every church should give a reason for its existence and clearly indicate the type of faith for which it stands. In order that this may be done justly there must be a careful consideration of the historic expression of Christianity for which a church stands. When this principle is applied to the Lutheran Church it will call for an analysis of what Lutheranism is. It may be defined as a historic movement of the sixteenth century, begun by Martin Luther, which eventuated in a definite conception of the gospel. Lutheranism was not an entirely new creation. It carried along with it many historical elements that were not rejected. There was a reformation of faith and practice only in those aspects of Christian truth and living which were believed to be out of accord with the original truth of the New Testament. Lutheranism was not a radical revolt, but a Conservative Reformation. It was not a self-willed rejection of all that was old, but simply a removal of such traditions and practices that had altered the faith of Christ and his Apostles through a misdevelopment.

The first and outstanding characteristic of Lutheranism must be sought in the experience of Martin Luther himself. This does not mean that Martin Luther and his position are

the only determinants in the analysis of Lutheranism. But it is true that the starting point of Lutheranism, and the source from which it flows, is to be found in the spiritual experience of Martin Luther. Luther did not find a certain foundation for his faith in the medieval church. There was no definite assurance for the individual soul of its salvation, except the promises of the church. These promises were conditioned by many demands of deeds to be done and acts to be performed. When the soul searched deeply it could not answer the question whether the works that had been done were sufficient. A superficial Christian of the Middle Ages, and one who merely followed tradition, would remain complacent, and only do what the Church commanded. But the experience of Paul and Augustine renewed itself in Luther. He could find no satisfaction in a Christianity of laws and ordinances. The conscience that searched itself could never be sure that it had done enough to merit salvation. In fact, the seeking conscience became uncertain of any merit whatever. Luther did not find peace for his soul even when he entered the cloister and engaged in many penances. The only answer that finally gave him personal assurance was the free forgiveness of sins. This forgiveness of sins came from divine grace. Divine grace rested on the atonement of Christ. The atonement of Christ gave the basis for justification. When man simply accepted the work of Christ, and made him his personal Savior, he was sure of his salvation. This certainty rested on the objective act of justification, in which God declared the sinner just for the sake of Christ. Faith created nothing, it simply accepted the person and the work of Christ in his propitiation. It was, thus, not the Church that gave assurance but God Himself through Jesus Christ. The individual did not make for himself an illusory deliverance, but he simply accepted the salvation that had been wrought. But there was the condition of the free acceptance. This acceptance, however, was not a mere human resolution, but it was brought about through the power

of the Holy Spirit acting in and through the Word of God.

The Centrality of the Word

It was the Word of God which was the foundation of faith. Luther found the certainty in the Word of God and its declarations. There must be a clear distinction kept in mind between the Word of God and the Bible. Luther and true Lutheranism have never made a fetish of the Bible as a book. It has never made the Bible a new law. But it finds in the Bible the infallible norm and standard of faith. The Bible is the Word of God because it contains the Word of God. The Word of God is the living truth of God uttered by prophets, apostles and Christ himself. Through it and through the history and truth which it proclaims we have the revelation of God. The Bible is the record of the revelation. Verbal tradition was not able to keep the messages of revelation and its history untainted and pure. Therefore, there came about the written record which preserved the original and true revelation. This revelation, when preached or sung, or used in whatever way and form, is the Word of God. The Lutheran conception is, therefore, not a legal one. It believes that the same God who revealed Himself in His highest form in the personality of Jesus Christ as the Word also revealed Himself prior to Christ and subsequent to him through the living messages and interpretations of history given to prophets and apostles. They spoke the Word of God. What they spoke in its essential features, but not in completeness, has been preserved in the record of Revelation. Its historical genuineness guarantees the authentic character of the original messages and occurrences. Luther, therefore, and true Lutheranism rest upon a record historically assured, but they do not worship the record. The record is only the container and conveyor of the living truth. This living truth relives whenever it is preached or presented in any form. Out of the creative power of this

living Word men are reborn, and souls find the assurance of their salvation. They are not subject to the dictates of a church, but they rest upon the living truth and the living power of the Word of God.

The Christianity of Lutheranism

Lutheranism conceives of Christianity as a life, but not merely as a life. This life must be formed by the Truth, the Christ. Christ is not a mere undefined personality. He cannot be found only through emotion. Men must know in whom they have believed, and what they have believed. In this attitude Lutheranism is not merely intellectual. At the same time there is no anti-intellectual tendency to be found in it. Its definition of faith is trust as an attitude of will. But will is not blind but is enlightened by the truth. Emotion accompanies the attitude. But emotion is not the source nor the mainstay of faith. It is true that the demand of clarity of faith may lead and has led at times into mere intellectual correctness. Lutheranism has had its period of orthodoxism, but this is not the best Lutheranism. In the same manner we must not identify Lutheranism with pietism. It believes in vital piety as it believes in vital truth. The living faith is the faith of the whole man through thought, emotion and action. Lutheranism has always stood for the whole personality of man accepting the whole personality of Christ, and of all that points to him and follows after him.

The personal centrality of the Lutheran faith is Jesus Christ in all his fullness. The doctrine of justification by faith is not an impersonal belief. It has its rich content in the person and work of Christ. While theology may and rightly can discuss doctrine as doctrine in an impersonal manner and in the form of a system, living Lutheranism as piety cannot exist except as it lives in the person of Christ. All doctrines are derivations from the vital faith and life of the Christian. They can only be true, and use the logic and philosophy of man for the analysis and synthesis of the living existence of

faith in the soul of man. But when this living faith is analyzed, its content is Christ in his completeness. Faith cannot remain uncertain about Christ. What it believes him to be is the outcome of what he is and what he has become to the believing spirit of man. There is no single feature of his humanity which is neglected. True Lutheranism accepts the fully human Christ, and it makes of him no illusion nor myth. But it finds that this Son of Man is also truly the Son of God. The Son of God does not mean merely the Messiah, but the real incarnate Son of the living God. It therefore accepts the incarnation as a historical fact with all that is implied in it. At the same time it knows that Christ lived on earth as a servant and not in the form of God. However different thinkers may interpret the kenosis, all agree that there was a real withholding of divine power by the incarnate Son of God. Lutheranism does not attach value merely to Christ's life and to his example. It is not satisfied with making him a religious genius and an exceptional teacher of religion. He does not remain only an ideal to be followed. Essentially Christ is believed in as Savior. Therefore his death and resurrection and ascension have a large place in Lutheranism. The atoning and redeeming Christ is central. His redemption is not merely an act of love but a real ransom paid for the sins of men. It sees in the crucifixion the evidence of the holiness of God, and His rectification of the moral order. There is no sentimentality of love, but the holiness of love is stressed. Love could not be true love if it were not holy and delivered man from sin through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. These convictions Lutheranism holds to be very fundamental and essential for the salvation of man. They cannot be surrendered or modified without destroying the foundation of faith, and the real basis of salvation.

Predestination

Because the Lutheran Church, when it interprets Lutheranism truly, centers everything in Christ, it cannot accept

an interpretation of predestination which emphasizes the sovereignty of God exclusively or largely. It holds that men are predestined in Christ. There is no acceptance of rejection or reprobation of sinners by the mere fiat of God. Sinners are lost through their own sins. Saints are saved by the grace of God on the condition of faith. While there has been some debate in the Lutheran Church whether men are predestined to faith, or in view of faith, it nevertheless is true that there is no absoluteness in the election of God. Most Lutherans make faith central, not as a virtue, but as a necessary condition of acceptance by God. The universal will of God for salvation becomes individualized when men either reject Christ, or when they accept him through faith.

The Holy Spirit and the Sacraments

The whole Christian life is begun and developed through the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit is not considered to be some sort of mystic, undefined influence. His action takes place through the Word of God. Whatever Christ is, the Spirit takes and brings close to us. We cannot, by our own reason or strength, come to Jesus Christ or believe in him, but the Holy Spirit guides us to him. Whenever the Word of God is read or heard the Spirit makes an approach to us through its truth. If we receive it in a willing spirit he can enlighten us, regenerate us, and make possible our conversion. Lutheranism does not believe in a salvation unmediated. The Holy Spirit is mediated through the Word of God which is a means of salvation. In the same manner baptism and the Lord's Supper are means of salvation and grace only as they are operative through the power of the Word of God. Baptism is not merely water, a mere ceremony of initiation, or a symbolic rite, but it is a cleansing of the Spirit because the water is comprehended in the Word of God. The Lord's Supper is not a magic transformation of bread and wine, but bread and wine at the time of celebration, when partaken, become the purveyors of the body and blood of Christ. They become such means through the

Word of God. There is no impanation or consubstantiation, but only a temporary sacramental presence of the omnipresent Christ.

The Church

Lutheranism starting again from the Word of God makes it the creative power in the founding and continuation of the Church. The Church is not conceived of as an organization, or a visible community. It becomes visible wherever the Word is preached and the sacraments are celebrated. Through these audible and visible media the Church can be recognized. In its real essence it exists in the hearts of those who believe in Christ. The outer associations and the forms of government are not parts of the very being of the Church. They are the outgrowth of the life of the Church in the world, and become necessary because of human conditions and human contacts. There must be some external order and association, but this order and association does not constitute the Church. It is not the Episcopal or Presbyterian, or Congregational, or Synodical form of government, which constitutes the Church. It rests altogether upon the truth of the gospel, and its primary mission is to preach the gospel in its purity and to administer the sacraments according to the institution of Jesus Christ. Whatever other tasks the Church at any time may undertake, must be in execution of the mission of the Church to spread the gospel. The Church is no mere social agency and no lawgiver for men. It may announce and should announce the principles of life which apply to the individual and to society, but it has no function to seek legal enforcement of its principles. It is a teacher of righteousness, but not a legislator or executive in the cause of righteousness. Its ideals must not be dictated by any temporary social conception or merely philosophic morality. The Church stands or falls with its fidelity to the gospel in its confession and work. This ideal of the Church necessarily involves its relation to the State. It has no power

nor function to dictate to the State. Still less should it attempt to control the policies of the State or of the nation. It ought to declare the gospel and apply it to the State and to international relations. But as little as the State should actually dictate to the Church, so little should the Church make any demand upon the State for legislation to uphold the cause of righteousness in any sphere of life. The Church should never lobby, although it has a right to ask for the protection of the State through laws that guarantee its freedom. It can demand its full chance to live its life without interference. Because the education in the faith is a part of its mission it must demand of the State the liberty to carry on this part of its task. It is, of course, to be understood that nothing is to be taught which opposes the State, or sows seeds of conflict and enmity among the citizens on account of their different beliefs. The Church must demand the same freedom in its work of love, and in the efforts it puts forth to exhibit true Christian charity in institutional or other forms. The Church should never allow itself to be intimidated by the State. The State has no right, even in great exigencies and crises to call upon the Church as an agency to uphold the cause of the State as such. In our modern life even where the State and the Church are separated, the State has often encroached upon the right of the Church, especially in the time of war.

The Unique Contributions of Lutheranism

With these essentials of the Lutheran position clearly before us it becomes readily apparent what unique contributions Lutheranism can make to modern Christianity. Its conception of the Word of God, not as a law, but as the life of God Himself, through the medium of truth, is its peculiar virtue. It does not need any other truth, and it cannot permit the correction or subtraction of any part of the truth of the Word of God. It believes that loyalty and devotion to the Word of God, and the utmost effort to present it

in its purity without adulteration, is fundamental. It desires to keep its pulpits free from any message that is not shot through with the gospel of Jesus Christ. While it allows for the historic development from the Old to the New Testament, and in its best attitude will not date back New Testament truth into the Old Testament, it nevertheless does not reject the unfolding historic revelation of the Old Testament. But it is very careful not to allow the legal spirit of the Old Testament to dominate its message. It believes in the full freedom of the evangelical faith as this is produced by the Word of God.

Lutheranism and Liberty

Out of the attitude of Lutheranism toward the Word of God there follows its conception of freedom. With Luther it holds that the faith which accepts Christ makes man a lord of all things. This liberty is an inner freedom which the Christian obtains through the Son that makes us free as His truth makes us free. The freedom of the soul is not abolished by any limitations of the natural order, or any hindrances of environment. Heredity does not destroy the liberty of the Christian. But this liberty does not set itself to make its own laws. Through the love which grows out of the liberty of faith a Christian becomes the servant of all. In other words, the Christian freely strives to do the will of the law through the love which is the fulfillment of the law. As the heart of the law is love the Christian lives in this love, not because it is commanded, but because it is the sphere in which his liberty moves. The evangelical liberty, therefore, is not the gratification of individual desires, or indulgence in material desires and appetites. Because the free Christian lives in love he limits himself. He is not under any restraint but he restrains himself. For the sake of the common good he obeys the law of the land and lives up to the moral law. In the spirit of love he makes the will of the law his own. It is not imposed upon him as a burdensome obligation. As

far as anyone thinks that the law of righteousness and love is an obligation that is hard to meet, so far he has not attained unto the liberty of the Christian man. Lutheranism is free from the gravitation of antinomianism to legalism. Because of its sane position as to the source and character of freedom Lutheranism has a distinctive message for our day. It is entirely different from the lawlessness and the legalism that characterize our own day. Its freedom is the service of God and man.

Salvation

It has attained this freedom through its conception of salvation. Its doctrine does not subject salvation, primarily, to a decree of God. Still less does it reduce salvation to a mere reformation or ethical change. It confesses that the liberty of man rests upon the person and the work of Christ. He has wrought deliverance through the act of his redemption. Lutheranism can never depart from the strongest valuation of the propitiation wrought by Christ, when he gave his life as a ransom for a sinful world. Because redemption is stressed Lutheranism cannot allow a depression of the power and reality of sin. It does not make it an essential element in human nature, but it declares that we are in the line of sinful heredity, and that we commit sin. The greatness of the guilt of sin demands the greatness of the redemption through Christ. Genuine Lutheranism has no patience with the modern effort to make sin merely an excusable fault or an unfortunate tendency. It is opposed to all naturalism and pantheism which minimize sin. It has no sympathy with the modern theories of divine immanence, that so unite God and man as to do away with sin. There is a tendency to emphasize God's love so much on the part of modern theology, that His holiness is forgotten. This is the outcome of the loss of the sense of sin. Lutheranism believes that the world cannot be made better by changing the environment, or by treating man physically, but only by man's deliverance from sin

through Christ. It has not departed from the declaration of the awfulness of sin, and it opposes the modern theories, which claim that the world is being evolved into righteousness without redemption. It therefore has a very necessary and distinct message for the awakening caused by the great World War. It proposes no social cures for sin, but regeneration and conversion as they grow out of the redemption of Jesus Christ.

The Mediation of Grace

Another distinctive feature which is little understood is the Lutheran conception of the mediation of grace. In the natural world our bodies are nourished and strengthened by the food through which the divine energy of life operates. In the same manner in the world of grace there is a prolongation of this same process of obtaining life and salvation through means. Lutheranism holds that the Word of God, and especially the Word in the sacraments, is conveyed through the audible human word and through the material means of water, bread and wine. It does not destroy the content for the sake of the means, and it does not destroy the means for the sake of the content. Its special position preserves what is best in Roman Catholicism and in Protestantism. It is neither rationally critical, nor magically ignorant in respect to the means of salvation. Its doctrine has the best testimony not only of the New Testament but of the early Church. If rightly understood its belief on the means of grace can become a great bond of union for all Christians.

The Personality of Christ

All of these unique contributions grow out of the central position which Lutheranism has always given to the person of Christ. Its conception is fully Christo-centric. Faithful to all that Christ is and means, to his teaching, his example, his life, his death, and his *whole* redemption, it makes its

appeal to the conscience of men. The Christ it presents is not one of mere reason or of mere sentiment, but one who endeavors to reach the human conscience. For this reason Lutheranism is really most sanely religio-ethical. It combines the morals demanded with the faith confessed in a living bond. All of this is the outcome of the apprehension of the full Christ in his Saviorhood.

Lutheranism Confessional

Lutheranism has always been confessional in its attitude. It still believes that a church should have a clear and definite creed. Confessionalism is founded on the psychology of faith. As St. Paul says: "With the heart men believeth, and with the mouth confession is made." It is impossible to hold a living religious conviction without its coming to expression and utterance in a confession. The individual who believes must inevitably be led to confess his belief. An unconfessed belief is of no value. It is equally true of a church that it must express the faith which it holds. Lutheranism has been true to this principle. It recognizes the fact that a confession is a standard by which a church must be known in the world. Every confession is therefore a symbol, a flag, around which those who believe gather. Confessionalism, therefore, creates the unity of a church. There can be no vital unity without unity in the truth. The living content of the gospel must find its lodgment and its expression through the confession of men. Lutheranism has lived up to this ideal, and has always believed that for the unity of the Church there must be a unity of common conviction and common confession of the truth.

The great historical confessions of the Christian Church have always been accepted by Lutheranism. It uses in its service the Apostles' Creed, which is the developed baptismal confession. It is apostolic in content but was not written by the Apostles. Nevertheless it is the simple basis of the facts and truth of the gospel. The second great Creed which

Lutheranism accepts in common with the great historic churches is the Nicene Creed. This confession, like the Apostles' Creed rests upon the baptismal confession. But on account of a heresy, which doubted the deity of Christ, it emphasizes his essential oneness with the Father and calls him "God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance of the Father." This creed has been central in all churches that defend the deity of Christ. The third creed universally acknowledged is the Athanasian Creed. This creed is of later origin, and does not belong to the age of Athanasius. It defends the Trinity and the incarnation of God in Jesus, which it expresses in strong dogmatic language and calls the catholic faith, upon the knowledge and observance of which salvation depends. Modern Lutheranism does not reject this creed, but it realizes that its form is somewhat extreme. The substance, however, it considers essential to a sound Christian faith.

The confessions which are those that are peculiar to Lutheranism found their beginning in Luther's Small and Large Catechisms. It was the need of the common people which moved Luther to take the Ten Commandments, the three articles of the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, as the foundation upon which to teach the common man the essentials of the Christian faith. The Large Catechism is an explanation for teachers of the main ideas of the Small Catechism. The Small Catechism has had a wonderful influence, and in it all those who are confirmed in the Lutheran Church are instructed. It is not a complete system of dogmatics, but a simple statement of the fundamentals of our faith in a living form. The great confession of the Lutheran Church, as a Church, is the Unaltered Augsburg Confession. It is, in its intent, an irenic document which aims to tell the exact position of Lutheranism. Its acceptance has been universal. Melanchthon, who wrote the Augsburg Confession, with the approval of Luther,

found it necessary soon after the issuance of the Augsburg Confession to defend it more fully for the theologians. To this end he wrote the Apology of the Augsburg Confession. It was an answer to the Confutation which the Roman Catholic theologians had issued. After the Diet of Augsburg, the Emperor Charles V had promised a general council within six months. He was hindered, however, by the action of Pope Clement VII, who proposed conditions which the evangelical party could not accept. Finally a council was called in 1537, and to meet the demands of this council Luther wrote The Smalcald Articles. These are very strong in their rejection of Romish errors. In their appendix they are willing to grant a certain right to the bishops. The final confession of Lutheranism is the Formula of Concord. This was agreed upon in order to unify the churches on certain controversies that had arisen within the Lutheran Church. These controversies were concerned with rejection of the law, with the problem whether justification was the infusion of righteousness, or the imputation of righteousness, whether certain popish ceremonies were indifferent and could be used, whether good works were to be largely stressed, whether man coöperates in his salvation, and whether the Lutheran position on the Lord's Supper was to be approximated to the Calvinistic idea or not. These are the essential confessions of Lutheranism.

Not all Lutheran Churches have accepted all of these symbols. There has been no variance in the acceptance of the Catechisms and the Unaltered Augsburg Confession. But even where Lutheranism has not officially endorsed the other confessions it has always acknowledged them as historical documents that are essentially in unity with the truth confessed in the Unaltered Augsburg Confession. There have been times when certain groups within the Lutheran Church have not realized the fact of the sameness of the truth in all the confessions. Generally, where there was an effort to reject some tenets of the later confessions it was

found that there was a refusal to accept some truths of the Augsburg Confession in their native and original sense. Sometimes there was a misunderstanding due to the historical situation and value of the different confessions. The later theological confessions do not have the same value as the popular Catechisms. They are not as fundamental in some measure as the Unaltered Augsburg Confession. In American Lutheranism it has been found necessary to approve, if not officially to accept, all of the confessions as indicative of genuine Lutheranism. The history of Lutheranism in America has tended toward full confessionalism and not away from it.

The confessions are held to be standards which are secondary to the Scriptures. The final standards by which Lutheranism desires to be judged are the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments. Lutheranism considers its confessions to be expositions of the infallible standard of God's Word. They are normative in the sense of the interpreted value of evangelical faith. No one is compelled to accept them by force or law. There was a time in the early history of Lutheranism when in some countries Lutheran preachers were asked to accept the confessions under oath. But even this oath was not required prior to a thorough examination of the Lutheran creeds, and a willing and convinced adherence to them. In our day there is no formal oath, although there is a promise on the part of Lutheran preachers and teachers of their *ex-animo* acceptance of the Lutheran confessions. The common people are not pledged to anything but the faith of the Catechism, which they have been taught. Lutheranism considers it necessary to have these confessions because the truth of the Word of God is differently interpreted in different Churches. It believes that all men have some creed, and that it is far better for men to know what they believe than to be indefinite and uncertain in their faith. No theological candidates are admitted to the Lutheran Church unless they have tested the

Lutheran faith and willingly believe it. Then they express their conviction that they will teach according to the confessions, because what the confessions hold has become their own convictions. It is only in this manner that the creeds have any normative value. They must be accepted freely and confessed freely. Where men cannot accept them they are free to leave the Lutheran Church. Lutheranism considers its confessions as the necessary bond of its inner unity in the truth of the gospel.

Post-Confessional Theology

After the confessions there developed a Lutheran theology which has often been given more importance in some sections of the Lutheran Church than it deserves. There were a group of Lutheran theologians of the seventeenth century who had a very scholastic method. But despite this method, most of their teachings were very sound. When a deviation occurred from confessionalism it happened that in the return to sound Lutheranism these early theologians were given too large a place. They are not in any sense normative. Lutheranism must remain conscious of a historical development, and it cannot, therefore, neglect the knowledge of these outstanding theologians of the post-Reformation period. But there have been modern Lutheran theologians who have modified the doctrine of inspiration, and the doctrine of kenosis. These theologians hold that they have not injured the essential position of Lutheranism. In abandoning a purely mechanical theory of inspiration, and in making clearer the humiliation of Jesus they have served the Church. There is, however, a section of Lutheranism which altogether rejects the modern development. But the great mass of Lutherans are not willing to hold that the period after the confessions is normative, even in a secondary sense. Modern Lutheranism, on the whole, believes that theology can advance. But it does not think that it has been necessary up to this time to change any essential position of early Luther-

anism. Whatever fixity Lutheran theology has is due to its character and not to any inherent principle opposed to advance. In European countries there has been greater freedom among Lutheran theologians in the framing of systems of truth than in America. The Lutheranism of America has been tied more strongly to the earlier period than the theology of European countries. The freer attitude in the European universities toward theology as a science has allowed newer and more individual interpretations than the theological seminary position of Lutheranism in America. But even the freer attitudes of European theologians have not set aside the essential elements of Lutheranism. There has been a progress in statement but no progress has made it necessary to reject any of the fundamentals of early Lutheranism. Perhaps there has been at times too much conservatism. But the Lutheran Church was not compelled by modern advance of thought to change as much of its theology as other Protestant Churches. The Lutheran position has been capable on the whole of better adaptibility to modern philosophical and ethical progress than some other theologies. Sometimes Lutheran theologians have shown an ignorance of modern progress, and have not used the best modern forms of thought in which Lutheranism could find excellent means of expressing its essential position.

Lutheranism and Biblical Criticism

Lutheranism has not set aside in its best attitude genuine modern biblical criticism. This has been especially true of the Lutheranism of Europe. In America Lutheranism has been somewhat more backward in appreciating the value of modern biblical scholarship. To textual criticism there has been no objection on the part of well-informed Lutheran theologians. Some of the finest work in the study of manuscripts, and in the effort to arrive at the best text, was carried on by Lutheran theologians of Europe. Textual criticism is a historical fact, and its necessity cannot be doubted

by any intelligent Lutheran theologian. In the same manner Lutheranism has accepted the probable results of the history of the biblical books. It has not succumbed to extreme liberal positions in fixing the age of the biblical books. The history of the canon of the Old and New Testaments has been historically valued according to the best results that scholarship has been able to reach.

Modern Historical Method and Lutheranism

There has been an acceptance in Lutheranism of what is good in the modern historical method. But in many sections Lutheranism has not bowed down to a philosophy which is back of some of the historical criticism. There is a historical criticism which attempts to eliminate all real prophecy, all miracles, and all mystery. It endeavors to reduce the Bible to the level of the usual historical documents. An application of principles that rest on a merely natural development has often been made. Lutheranism cannot accept a historical criticism which does not permit the presence of the divine guidance and the divine realities in the revelation recorded in the Bible. Many Lutheran theologians have held that the arguments by which vocabulary and style have been used to totally disarrange parts of the Bible, rest on a very slender basis. The historical coloring is more important, but it ought not to be used to destroy the prophetic outlook. There has been a return of some criticism to a saner position, but Lutheranism feels itself justified in maintaining a waiting attitude. It is true that some theologians of the Lutheran name abroad have been critics; and sometimes they have taken extreme positions. Generally, European Lutheranism has, however been more conservative in its critical attitude. Here in America there has been no theologian of standing who has been a negative critic. True higher criticism is not out of tune with Lutheranism. The Lutheran Church is concerned, however, that the living truth of the Word in the Bible shall not be tampered with. Much mod-

ern criticism has attacked some clearly established and textually approved truth. Lutheranism, with its fidelity and loyalty toward the living Word of God, cannot have any sympathy with the type of criticism which makes inroads upon the truth of God. On the other hand, it does not believe that genuine historical research can do any harm to the essential truth of the Word of God. This truth has evidenced itself in the history of Lutheranism, and has found its confirmation in the rich experience of the life of believers. There is no reason for an attempt to justify every actual statement of the Bible because errors of transcription have clearly crept in. But these mistakes have not affected any real truth. Consequently, there is no fear in genuine Lutheranism of any sound criticism. The only opposition to criticism is the conviction that criticism must value the unique truth of the Bible in its reality and not destroy it. Where this principle is observed Lutheranism has no quarrel with any type of real constructive criticism of the history of the biblical books.

Lutheranism and Fundamentalism

Lutheranism takes its own position over against modern tendencies in theology and in philosophy. It appears at first that because of its general orthodox evangelical position it would favor fundamentalism. But while it approves of the general intention of those who desire to defend the essentials of faith, it cannot follow fundamentalism in many of its contentions. The general attitude of fundamentalists is to exalt the Bible in a legal way. It is often presented as a code to be followed mechanically and with absolute literalness. There is a lack of the appreciation of the living Word of God within the Bible. The Bible is overvalued as a book. Again, fundamentalism is inimical to some of the results of modern progress in human science and thought. It frequently opposes not only the wrong philosophy that is put back of natural facts, but also the facts themselves. It has a legal

prohibitive character against any knowledge that is not purely biblical. Because of this character fundamentalism is narrow and one-sided, and it actually demands ignorance in order to maintain faith. Lutheranism, which was born in a university, in its genuine form can have no sympathy with such an attitude. The Lutheran faith does not deny secondary causes in order to exalt God as the first cause. It is friendly to all progress of science and thought that does not destroy evangelical religion.

Another fault which characterizes fundamentalism is the manner in which it attempts to describe literally and in detail the last things. Lutheranism has always opposed the errors of Chiliasm. It has no sympathy with those who attempt to reckon the exact dates, and the exact happenings, at the end of time. It does not reject the Revelation of St. John, and other prophetic books in the Bible, but it realizes that much prophecy that is still unfulfilled compels us to wait for the end of time. Lutheranism conserves sanity in the question about the end of things. It does not deny the second coming of Christ, and the clear realism of the essential features foretold about the day of judgment, and the end of the world. But it does not attempt to describe in detail what the providence of God has not yet revealed with clarity. It leaves some things to the future, and does not declare itself cocksure about what we still know only in part.

Lutheranism and Modernism

Lutheranism is far more adverse, however, to modernism. It is not unwilling to use modern forms of thought and established modern results, but it considers the fundamental error of modernism to be the constant correction of the body of evangelical truth, by the changing conceptions of science and the varying contentions of philosophy. Modernism creates much uncertainty about the articles of faith. In an inconsistent way it accepts some of the mysteries of religion and rejects others. In the effort to satisfy the pride and intellec-

tual sophistication of certain groups, it surrenders many essential and elemental convictions of faith. The religion which it teaches makes it uncertain of the deity of Christ, of the miracles, of Christ's supernatural birth, and of many other historically established facts of the Bible. It is always substituting the attitude of science for the attitude of faith. Modernism is the encroachment of a naturalistic philosophy upon religion. It forgets that the best scientific conception cannot save the soul. Thus it has become unreal and destructive of vital faith. Lutheranism has no sympathy with it in any of its forms.

Lutheranism and Naturalism

Because Lutheranism has a clear conception why it rejects modernism in theology, it is also definite in its refusal to have anything to do with naturalism. All true religion must maintain the supernatural. Naturalism, whether dogmatic or empirical, is fundamentally opposed to anything that is beyond the knowledge and control of the external, natural world. It, therefore, denies all mystery and every miracle. It wants to reduce religion to the mere status of human behavior in terms of a misnamed psychology. For it, religion in its usual acceptance is an illusion. Because Lutheranism maintains the necessity of the supernatural, mysterious, and the miraculous, as essentials of the truth of the gospel, it is utterly opposed to all naturalism.

In the same manner the Lutheran faith can have no sympathy with modern humanism. Humanism exalts humanity and forgets God. It places its confidence in mere man, and glorifies human progress and human development. It forgets that man needs the deliverance of divine salvation. The fact of human sin and the existence of evil are practically neglected by humanism. For this reason it is utterly wrong when it pins its faith upon human nature and upon human accomplishment, and disregards the fact that man needs a redeemer. Lutheranism, which is very insistent on the question of the need of salvation, must therefore constantly pro-

test against any theory which wrongly glorifies human nature and human progress. It sees much evil in the world and it must describe the real progress to the advance of the Kingdom of God and the power of the spirit of Jesus Christ. There are so-called Christians who have been influenced by humanism to the degree of denying that Jesus said anything about sin. These and like misrepresentations, Lutheranism must combat because of its truth and because of actual Christian experience.

In reference to evolutionism, the Lutheran faith must also take a negative attitude. It will not deny, in its best form, that there are indications in nature of development. It glories in the fact that the successive steps of creation in Genesis are to-day in unison with the hypothesis of science. But it will not admit that the process of nature without God gave life. It traces all life back to God. In the creation of man it insists that his soul was not the product of matter. A genuine Lutheranism cannot make man the mere product of natural development. Whatever may be the history of his body, the spirit of man is from God, and from God directly. Evolutionism is fundamentally pure naturalism. It has a world that creates itself. The process is made to stand in place of the creator. Were evolutionism accepted it would mean the final denial of all religion. It is inconsistent to accept evolutionism and still attempt to be religious. It is not necessary to put a materialistic philosophy back of modern science. The latest developments show that science itself is uncertain of matter. It is revising many of its assertions. The best scientists are allowing mystery at the heart of the universe. Those who are most at home in the latest results do not deny that there is an evidence of spirit in the universe. Lutheranism rejoices when men turn away from a deceptive philosophy to a worshipful attitude before the creation of God.

Lutheranism and Christian Unity

The day has passed when Lutheranism is merely polemic against other forms of evangelical faith. It is willing to-day

to coöperate and confer with others, but this is not true of all Lutheran bodies. There are some that still stand absolutely aloof, and condemn not only other evangelical bodies, but also all Lutheran bodies which have any contact whatever with other churches. There are great movements to-day toward which Lutheranism is not indifferent. It takes part and gives its confession of faith. There is a friendly attitude, and a willingness to consider other points of view than its own on the part of sane Lutheranism.

On the other hand Lutheranism is not ready to enter into organic union with other Protestant bodies. The reason for this unwillingness lies in the fact that many efforts at actual organic union rest upon indifference toward articles of faith which for Lutheranism are essential. Lutheranism does not believe that there can be any effective union upon mere sentiment. There must be a unity in the truth of the gospel. After comparison with the positions that are advocated to-day Lutheranism feels that in the light of the gospel it cannot surrender its historic position. It is willing, wherever possible, to enter into common projects that do not compromise its confessional attitude and convictions. Lutheranism deplores the method, which is partly employed, of compelling union on the basis of economic considerations. It can understand why others who have surrendered many of their historic positions, and, who have become rather lax and indifferent, can unite. But as for itself Lutheranism still maintains a strong body of doctrine that is a legitimate inference of the truth of the gospel. With this regnant conviction prevalent in Lutheranism it is not possible for it to deny what it honestly believes and holds. It will never allow itself to be intimidated. After historic experiences with different types of unionism it has always found it necessary to return to the position that it cannot surrender its essential doctrines.

The Right of Lutheranism to Be Separate

Because Lutheranism has maintained the integrity of the doctrines of the gospel in its conviction, and because these

convictions have not been disproven, it is convinced that it has a right to maintain its distinct and separate existence. It has given to the Church at large the precious truth of the Word of God as a living power, of the essential unity of the divine and human Christ, of the Church as the body of believers, of the sacraments as conveyors of actual grace. Its conception of the Christian life is in no way legal, for Lutheranism exalts the real freedom of the Christian man in faith. It makes faith fundamental to the realization of the fruit of the atonement in justification. At the same time it believes that faith is an active living attitude out of which love develops. It considers love as a unity and cannot think of the Christian life in terms of individual commands or prohibitions. Lutheranism, therefore, has a distinct message, and it is different in its whole spirit and attitude from the other Protestant Churches. Until some of these conceptions become more regnant in American Christianity, and until there is a deeper realization of the vital facts and truths of the gospel in which Lutheranism believes, it conceives that it has a right of separate existence and a real message for the world.

WHAT IS LUTHERANISM?

IX

WILLIAM H. T. DAU

[THE "Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States," which dates back almost to the very beginnings of the great German immigration before the middle of the last century, is conservative Lutheranism's most formidable expression in the United States. This body continues to present a solid and uncompromising tradition and is the second largest organization of Lutherans in America. Among the many unique distinctions of which it may well boast, one is most conspicuous: for years it has maintained at St. Louis the largest Protestant Theological Seminary in this country.

For sixteen years Dr. Dau was an honored member of the faculty of this seminary, holding the important professorship in English Dogmatics, from 1905 to 1921. During these years and longer, through the medium of classroom, pulpit and especially the press, he has exerted a tremendous influence upon the theological thought, particularly of the English-speaking section of his church. His long editorial experience reaches back to 1894 when, for five years, he edited the well-known English journal, *Lutheran Witness*. During his professorship he was for fifteen years general editor of the *Theological Quarterly* (1905-1920), five of which included editorship of the English department of the *Homiletic Magazine* (1905-1910). For six added years he continued his journalistic work, taking over the editorship of the *Theological Monthly* (1920-1926).

Few men are better known both within as well as without his synod than Dr. Dau. His contacts have been wide and varied, his accomplishments amazing. After his ordination in 1886 he assumed charge of the Trinity Lutheran Church, Memphis, Tennessee, 1886-1892. From 1892 to 1899 he was President of Concordia College, Conover, North Carolina. Then followed a six-year pastorate at Hammond, Indiana. He has served his synod on many of its important commissions, notably in 1921 as its representative in war-relief work in Germany and France. When, in 1925, the Lutheran University Association of Indiana took over Valparaiso University, Dr. Dau was sought out to become its executive head.

Articles from his pen have appeared from time to time in the

Biblical Review, in the *Christian Herald* and in the *American Journal of Theology.* His own books and brochures have come forth from the press with amazing rapidity: *Justification,* 1895; *Luther's Appeal to Magistrates of All Cities of Germany,* 1896; *Luther Examined and Re-Examined,* 1917; editor, *Four Hundred Years,* 1917; *The Leipzig Debate,* 1919; *He Loved Me,* 1919; *The Great Renunciation,* 1920; *Starcke's Prayer Book,* 1920; *At The Tribunal of Cæsar,* 1921; editor, *Ebenezer,* 1922; co-editor, *Concordia Triglotta,* 1922; etc.

Dr. Dau was born in Lauenburg, Pommerania, Germany, February 8, 1864. His education was begun at the Realschule and Progymnasium at Lauenburg and continued in this country at Concordia College, Fort Wayne, Indiana, and at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. In 1923 he was the recipient of the honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Concordia College, Adelaide, South Australia.—*The Editor.*]

As a historical entity Lutheranism and the Lutherans do not exist prior to 1519, and both terms were originally used with vituperative intent by Roman Catholics.[1] An anti-Roman and anti-Romanizing tendency, indeed, has always been a strong characteristic of genuine Lutheranism, but opposition to Roman Catholicism is not its *raison d'être,* and whenever it has occurred it has aimed not so much at the negative result of the destruction of false religious trends and practices as rather at the positive result of the retention of true and permanent religious values.[2]

However, the system of religious truth known as Lutheran-

[1] As the designation of a religious society the term "Lutheran" has been traced to one of Luther's fiercest and most relentless opponents, the Romanist, Dr. Eck. J. A. McHugh (*Cath. Encycl.,* 9, 458) claims that Eck used the term during the debate at Leipzig in 1519. Unquestionably it was Eck who popularized the term by his extensive and intensive activity in publishing the bull, *Exsurge, Domine,* of June 15, 1520, by which Pope Leo X had declared Luther excommunicated from the Church. (Gieseler, *Eccl. Hist.* iv, 51 ff.) His successor, Adrian VI, speaks of "the Lutheran sect" and "the Lutherans" in his instructions to the Legate Francesco Chieregati at the diet of Nuernberg, which met toward the close of the year 1522. (Luther's *Works.* St. Louis Ed. 15, 2125 ff.; Comp. *Trigl. Conc.* ed. Bente and Dau, 325, 42.)

[2] Lutherans do not regard pope-hating and priest-baiting as their life-calling. Knownothingism, Burchardism, the American Protective Association, and the Ku Klux Klan have found little sympathy among consistent Lutherans.

ism is older than these sixteenth-century terms, although there was not prior to that time an organization of an ecclesiastical group of people styled Lutherans. Gnesio-Lutherans desire the movement known as Lutheranism to be considered the continuation or repristination of the oldest religion of the human race of which we have definite historic record. It was not a formation, but a re-formation. It meant not to produce a new *ism,* but to reproduce Christianity. It did not establish a new creed, but reëstablished the Creed.

The correctness of this claim will not be disputed by anyone conversant with the writings of Luther. For the convenience of those who do not possess Luther's writings, or are unable to read them in the original, we submit the evidence from the St. Louis edition of his *Works.*

Luther was quick to perceive the danger that must arise to his followers from having the movement which he had inaugurated stamped with his name. As he viewed it, the danger was twofold; on the one hand, a false foundation for men's faith might be created by their espousing Luther's teaching *because it was Luther's,* and by coercing others to do the same. That would simply have meant to displace one form of spiritual tyranny by another. On the other hand, men might jeopardize their peace of conscience by forswearing allegiance to Luther to escape persecution, when in reality they would, by casting aside Luther, reject the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Luther set himself resolutely to combat this danger. To rioters at Wittenberg and Erfurt he wrote from his exile at the Wartburg, in January, 1522:

> I beg that my name be not mentioned and that people be called, not Lutherans, but Christians. What is Luther? The doctrine is not mine, nor have I been crucified for anyone. St. Paul (I Cor. 3. 4, 5) would not suffer Christians to be called after Paul or Peter, but only after Christ. Why should I—miserable piece of corruption that I am!—have this honor that the children of

Christ should be called after my abominable name? No, no, my dear friends, let us abolish party names, and be called Christians after Christ, whose doctrine we have.[3]

To the noble Hartmuth von Kronberg, Luther wrote in March of the same year:

> We have to thank God with our whole heart because He still gives evidence that He will not suffer His holy Word to be removed, for He has given to you and many others a love for His Word and a spirit that avoids offence. For this proves that these people do not believe on account of a man, but on account of the Word itself. Many there are who believe on my account; but those alone are sincere who adhere to the Word, even though they were to be told that I myself had denied and fallen away from the Word—which God forbid! These are the people that remain unconcerned, no matter what evil, horrible, abominable things they are told about me or my followers. For they do not believe in Luther but in Christ Himself. The Word has laid hold of them, and they have laid hold of the Word. They disregard Luther; let him be knave or saint—God is able to speak through Balaam as well as through Isaiah, through Caiaphas as well as through St. Peter, yea, through an ass. These are my people. For I myself do not know Luther, and do not wish to know him. Nor do I preach Luther, but Christ. The devil take Luther, if he can; but let him leave Christ in peace; then we also shall abide.[4]

A month later Luther published his opinion on Communion *sub utraque* and other innovations, in which he declared:

> As Paul says (Gal. 1, 8): "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that

[3] Vol. 10, col. 370 f.

[4] Vol. 15, col. 2506.

which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed," so say I, too, in the present case: In this and all other matters you must so firmly and surely build on the Word of God that you would not depart from it, even if—which God forbid!—I should turn fool and recant and deny my doctrine. In that event you must say: Though Luther himself or an angel from heaven should teach other doctrine, let it be accursed. For you must be the disciple, not of Luther, but of Christ. It is not sufficient to say: Luther, Peter, or Paul has said so, but you must feel Christ in your own heart, and you must be conscious without faltering that you have the Word of God, even though the whole world should fight against it. Until you feel thus, you surely have not yet tasted the Word of God. Your ears still cling to the mouth of a man, or your eyes to his pen; you have not yet embraced the Word with your inmost heart, and have not grasped the meaning of Matth. 23, 10: "One is your Master, even Christ." The Master teaches in the hearts of His disciples, however, through the external word of His preachers, who convey it to the ear; but it is Christ who drives the Word home. Hence, consider that you are facing persecution and death. In those trials I cannot be with you nor you with me. Every one must fight for himself, and overcome the devil, death, and the world. If in that emergency you were to look about to see where I am, or I where you are, and were to surrender your faith because you were told that I or some one else had taught a different doctrine, you would perish; for you would have allowed the Word to slip out of your heart; you would not be found clinging to the Word, but to me or others. There would be no help for you then.

However, toward the close of the second part of this treatise Luther says (and this refers to the other danger mentioned before):

I observe that a good admonition must be administered to those whom Satan now begins to persecute. There are some among them who would escape danger, when being attacked, by saying, I am not siding with Luther nor with anybody, but with the holy Gospel, or with the Church, or with the Roman Church.[5] By such tactics they secure their personal peace, and yet in their heart they regard my doctrine as evangelical and adhere to it. Verily, such a profession does not help them; it is the same as if they had denied Christ. Hence I pray these people to have a care. True, you must not, on your life and soul, say: I am Lutheran, or Papist; for neither Luther nor the Pope has died for you, nor is he your master, but Christ alone, and to Him you must profess allegiance. But if you hold that Luther's teaching is evangelical, and the pope's teaching unevangelical, you must not cast Luther aside altogether, or you will also cast his teaching aside, which you regard as the teaching of Christ. This is what you must say: I do not care whether Luther is a knave or a saint; his teaching, however, is not his, but Christ's own. For you observe that the tyrants are not merely seeking to kill Luther, but to destroy his teaching. It is because of the teaching that they lay hands on you, and ask you whether you are a Lutheran. Verily, in such a case you must not talk in words that sway like a reed, but must plainly confess Christ, no matter whether it is Luther, Claus, or George that has preached Him. Let go of the person, but confess the teaching.[6]

In his consolatory letter to his brethren at Miltenberg on the Main, Luther wrote in 1524: "Although I do not like to

[5] It was, no doubt, for reasons of expediency that Zwingli, in Switzerland, about this time manifested irritation when the Catholic party identified him with Luther. His statement: *"Neque ego Lutheri causæ hic patrocinor, sed evangelii,"* cannot enhance the world's esteem for him. On the same caution of "safety first" Erasmus acted a number of times.

[6] Vol. 20, col. 73 f., 90 f.

see the doctrine and people called Lutheran, and must suffer to see God's Word sullied with my name, still they must permit Luther, the Lutheran teaching and people, to remain."[7]

During the negotiations in 1528, to reach an agreement concerning their religion with Duke George of Saxony, Luther's friends in the Duke's dominions proposed to say that they intended to abide by the Gospel. Luther held that this would not suffice the Duke as an answer, and suggested that they might say: Inasmuch as the question regarding Luther's teaching referred to many things, they could not return a definite answer; for Luther was teaching many things which even Duke George approved, as, *e.g.,* his defense of the Sacrament against the *Schwaermer,* his statements regarding the soldiers' profession, civil government, etc. "Moreover, Luther himself purposes not to be Lutheran, except as far as he purely teaches the Holy Scripture."[8]

In his brochure *Concerning Secret and Stolen Letters,* of 1529, Luther fervently addresses God in heaven:

> My hearty wish and prayer, my diligent teaching and writing, aim at nothing else than to see the poor masses of Thy people, who have been so miserably torn by sects and confused by dreams of men, scattered and straying like a flock of sheep, converted to Thee again, that by Thy Spirit they may know Thee in the true faith as their only Shepherd and Master and Bishop of their souls. (Ezek. 34. 23; I Pet. 2. 25.) And for their sake I still pray that Thou wouldest exalt and preserve Thyself and Thy Word through our ministry, in order that they may abide with Thee in the one faith. For I have not sought to have them cling to me, or that I should rise to honor and high station, but I have directed them to Thee, and made them cling to Thee, in order that Thou mightest be greatly exalted, and glorious and praiseworthy among them.[9]

[7] Vol. 5, col. 1283. [8] Vol. 21a, col. 1093. [9] Vol. 19, col. 542.

Lastly, in his sermon from John 7. 16, on St. John's Day, July 1, 1531, Luther, referring to the words of Christ: "The doctrine is not mine," remarked:

> That is what I also say: The Gospel is not mine, thus distinguishing my teaching from that of all other preachers who do not hold my doctrine. Accordingly, I can say: This is my doctrine—Luther's doctrine; and again: It is not my doctrine; it is not in my hand, but is the gift of God. Good Lord! I did not spin it out of my own head; it did not grow in my garden; it did not flow from my spring; it was not born of me. It is God's gift, not an invention of men.[10]

Luther's associates and followers, the Lutheran Confessions, and the dogmatical treatises of the best exponents of Lutheranism have consistently maintained this position of the Reformer. Not only do they draw all their proofs for their doctrinal positions and their entire church practice from the oracles of the Christian religion, the Holy Scriptures, not only do they place the three ecumenical creeds, the Apostolic, the Nicene, and the Athanasian, at the head of the particular confessions of their own church, to establish their Christian genealogy,[11] but they assert again and again in

[10] Vol. 8, col. 27.

[11] Carpzov, in his Introduction to the Confessional Writings of the Lutheran Church, says: "The sole reason why our Church appealed to these symbols was to declare her agreement with the ancient Church, insofar as the faith of the latter was laid down in these symbols, to refute also the calumniations and the accusations of the opponents, and to evince the fact that she preaches no new doctrine and in no wise deviates from the Church Catholic." (p. 37.) Comp. Art. 1 of Augsb. Conf. (*Trigl. Conc.*, p. 43.) In 1528, two years before the Diet of Augsburg, Luther had published his "Confession," to which he referred in the tract on *The Three Symbols or Confessions of the Faith of Christ Unanimously Used in the Church,* which appeared in 1538. In this tract he says: "Whereas I have previously taught and written quite a bit concerning faith, showing both what faith is and what faith does, and have also published my Confession, setting forth both what I believe and what position I intend to maintain; and whereas the devil continues to seek new intrigues against me, I have decided, by way of supererogation, to publish conjointly, in the German tongue, the three so-called symbols, or Confessions, which have hitherto been received, read, and chanted throughout the Church. I would thereby reaffirm the fact that I side with

most fervent asseverations that Lutheranism means nothing to them if it does not mean Christianity. Luther "no more dreamt of foisting a new doctrine or catechism on the Christian Church than he ever thought of founding a new church. On the contrary, his sole object was to restore the ancient Apostolic Church." [12] Lutherans denounce as a "great error" "the assumption that Lutheranism is a form of Protestantism colored by the personal opinions of two reformers, Luther and Melanchthon. Lutheranism is the old faith of the Church, catholic and evangelical, protestant only as to Roman errors, founded on the teaching of Scripture, without the admixture of human reason." [13] It was, no doubt, from the conviction of the absolute congruity of Lutheranism with Christianity that the latest American Lutheran dogmatician, Dr. F. Pieper, published his treatise under the caption *Christliche Dogmatik.*

The Swedish king spoke Luther's mind when he said: "Let us not call our church Lutheran, let us call it Christian and Apostolic." [14] It is well that attention has been called to the fact that

> the Lutheran Church has never by any general official act taken the name Lutheran. Art, history, and popular usage have practically determined its title. Said the Marquis of Brandenburg when ridiculed as a Lutheran: "If I be asked whether with heart and lip I confess that faith which God has restored to us by Luther as His instrument, I have no scruple, nor have I a disposition

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the true Christian Church, which has adhered to these Symbols, or Confessions, to the present day, and not with the false, vainglorious church, which, in reality is the worst enemy of the true Church, having introduced much idolatry alongside of these beautiful confessions." (St. L. Ed. 10, 993; Erl. Ed. 23, 252.)

[12] F. Bente, Preface to *Concordia Triglotta,* p. 64. See also Dau, *Lutheranism and Christianity,* in *Four Hundred Years,* pp. 314-328; Walther, on *"Der Name 'Lutheraner'"* in *Der Lutheraner,* Vol. I, pp. 2 ff. and Preface to Vol. 6; Krauth, *Conservative Reformation,* pp. 117 ff.

[13] Schmauk and Benze, *The Confessional Principle and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church,* p. 6.

[14] Krauth, *Conserv. Reform.,* p. 118.

to shrink from the name Lutheran. Thus understood, I am, and shall to my dying hour remain, a Lutheran." This is the only sense in which any Lutheran tolerates the name.[15]

From this state of affairs two conclusions follow. First, the Lutheran Church is not a sect. There are historical reasons, ethical reasons, and reasons of convenience why the Lutheran Church cannot discard the name that was fixed upon her in derision. No loyal son of hers has any desire to-day to drop the time-honored name around which cluster memories of a most gallant fight which the Church militant has had to wage for the heritage of the faith once delivered to the saints. But no Lutheran who does not bear the name merely as a convenient denominational badge, but with full consciousness of its origin and import and with a sincere conviction of the moral obligation which it imposes on him, would even by connivance consent to have the name regarded and treated as a sect name, the opprobrious title affixed to rebel followers of a renegade leader who cut himself off from the one, holy, universal, Christian Church, the communion of saints. Lutherans will ever resent as a vile slander the official characterization of Luther as an apostate, which Pope Leo XIII expressed encyclically. They admit no difference in essence but merely in temporal existence between Lutheranism and Christianity, these two terms being in their view dogmatic, or doctrinal, equivalents. In its organized form, as the restored Church of apostolic purity of preaching and consistent ecclesiastical polity, or practice, they regard their Church for the time being as the true, visible Church of God on earth, and only guard this declaration against being misunderstood and misinterpreted to mean the alone-saving Church.[16]

[15] H. E. Jacobs, in *Universal Cyclopedia,* 7, 358.

[16] See Walther, *Die evangelisch-lutherische Kirche die wahre sichtbare Kirche Gottes auf Erden,* and *Die rechte Gestalt einer vom Staate unabhaengigen evangelisch-lutherischen Ortsgemeinde;* also Dr. F. Pieper's Lectures on the former of these two treatises.

In the second place, the approach to a correct understanding and just evaluation of Lutheranism must be the same as that to Christianity. In the judgment of competent modern scholars Christianity not only occupies the foremost position among the religions of the world, but must be assigned a position exclusively its own as the only religion of salvation for sinful man by the pardoning grace of God through faith in the sinner's Substitute, Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God. He by his holy life and innocent death vicariously atoned for the sinner's guilt, removed from him the curse, or damning verdict, of the Law which the sinner had broken and could never fulfill, and reconciled the sinner to God; God canceling all charges against the sinner in view of the perfect satisfaction rendered to His justice by the Redeemer's substitutive living and dying and at the same time crediting the sinner with all the righteousness vicariously acquired for him by the sinner's divine-human Proxy; the sinner, on the other hand, accepting by faith this extraordinary scheme of God as the only true and adequate way of establishing for him a complete and legally unimpeachable rehabilitation with God, and appropriating as his own the foreign righteousness of Christ, which God freely offers to all sinners without exception as a gift through the preaching of the Gospel and the application of the Gospel ordinances.

In a lecture before the British Bible Society, Max Mueller, the famous European scholar who opened the eyes of the world to the essential failure of the Oriental religions, said:

> In the discharge of my duties for forty years as Professor of Sanskrit in the University of Oxford I have devoted as much time as any man living to the study of the Sacred Books of the East, and I have found the one keynote—the one diapason, so to speak—of all these so-called sacred books, whether it be the Veda of the Brahmans, the Puranas of Siva and Vishnu, the Koran of the Mohammedans, the Zend-Avesta of the Parsees,

the Tripitaka of the Buddhists—the one refrain through all—salvation by works.[17] They all say that salvation must be bought with a price; and that the sole price, the sole purchase-money, must be our own works and deservings. Our own holy Bible, our Sacred Book of the East, is from beginning to end a protest against this doctrine. Good works are indeed enjoined upon us in that Sacred Book of the East far more strongly than in any other sacred book of the East; but they are only the outcome of a grateful heart—they are only a thank-offering, the fruits of our faith. They are never the ransom-money of the true disciples of Christ. Let us not shut our eyes to what is excellent and true and of good report in these sacred books, but let us teach Hindus, Buddhists, Mohammedans, that there is only one Sacred Book of the East that can be their mainstay in that awful hour when they pass alone into the unseen world. It is the Sacred Book which contains that faithful saying worthy to be received by all men, and not merely by us Christians,—that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.

Thomas Arnold, of Rugby, said: "The distinction between Christianity and all other systems of religion consists largely in this, that in these other, men are found seeking after God, while Christianity is God seeking after men."

With the assurance that characterizes the matured conviction of the historian, Guizot declares:

> Outside of Christianity there have been grand spectacles of activity and force, brilliant phenomena of genius and virtue, generous attempts at reform, learned

[17] This is the constant and indubitable criterion of every natural religion man has produced, or is able to produce, not only in the Orient, but anywhere else, not only in ancient but also in most recent times. The introduction of this element into the revealed religion of the Bible, even in a diluted, subdued, and guarded way, has always been regarded as a grave danger by the Christian Church, because it vitiates and, in the last conclusion, annihilates the salvation wrought by the Savior of the Christian Scriptures.

> philosophical systems, and beautiful mythological poems, but no real profound or fruitful regeneration of humanity and society. Jesus Christ from His cross accomplishes what erstwhile in Asia and Europe, princes and philosophers, the powerful of the earth, and sages, attempted without success. He changes the moral and the social state of the world. He pours into the souls of men new enlightenment and new powers. For all classes, for all human conditions He prepares destinies before His advent unknown. He liberates them at the same time that he lays down rules for their guidance; He quickens them and stills them. . . . He offers an effectual remedy for the evil which weighs upon humanity; to sin He opens the path of salvation, to unhappiness the door of hope.

Last, but not least, our countryman, Mark Hopkins, voices his belief in the singularity, exclusiveness, and finality of the Christian religion, thus:

> No, there is nothing on the face of the earth that can, for a moment, bear comparison with Christianity as a religion for man. Upon this the hope of the race hangs. From the very first it took its position as the pillar of fire, to lead the race onward. The intelligence and power of the race are with those who have embraced it; and now, if this, instead of proving indeed a pillar of fire from God, should be found but a delusive meteor, then nothing will be left to the race but to go back to a darkness that may be felt, and to a worse than Egyptian bondage.

In these striking utterances the consentient opinion stands out clear and strong: Christianity occupies a solitary place and demands an evaluation apart from all other religions. It does not belong in a Parliament of Religions: it is *the* religion. There is no substitute for it, for there is no equivalent in other religions for what Christianity offers. It cannot be

improved upon; it is the last word in religion; for it is, solely and alone, *the religion of a real salvation.*[18]

The birthplace and habitat of Lutheranism lie within the doctrinal province of soteriology. Luther's religious experience, first, of the accusing, terrifying, and crushing force of the divine law in the quickened conscience of a sinner, next, of the reviving, consolatory, and energizing force of the divine Gospel of the forgiveness of sin, is the typical and normal experience of every one who is made conscious of his spiritual insufficiencies in his natural condition. The mission of the God-man Redeemer was by His own declarations limited to the sick, the lost, the sinners.[19] That does not mean that Christ is the Savior only of part of the human race, but that the salvation which He brought is perceived and appreciated only by those who, despairing of themselves, recognize its absolute need and realize that in their approach to God and in their dealings with Him they cannot be anything else than supplicants, beggars, sick and feeble folk, utterly dependent on His sovereign mercy and grace. In like manner, "Luther's service was meant exclusively for those who are, like him, sighing for a gracious God because they are feeling their lost condition in their consciences."[20] Luther's criticism of Karlstadt, *viz.,* that he was perverting the order of salvation, is fully borne out by the known facts of the psychology of regeneration and conversion in the strict sense:

> The beginning of putting a person in the way of salvation must be made by preaching the law to him, not for the purpose of making him keep it and thereby secure the goodwill of God, but to show him the real

[18] Comp. Dau, *Essentials of the Faith that Saves.* Two lectures delivered during "Lutheran week" before Lutheran students of the University of Wisconsin at Madison, Wis. Publ. in Theol. Quarterly, Vol. XXI, April, pp. 65-88.

[19] Matt. 9, 12; 18, 11; 9, 13.

[20] Dr. Wilh. Walther, *Die schwaermerische Bewegung der Reformationszeit,* in *Moderne Irrtuemer im Spiegel der Geschichte,* p. 185.

> wall which separates us from God, to reveal our sin to us, to terrify our conscience and to humble us in the presence of God's anger. When this has been accomplished the consciences of men are to be raised up by the preaching of forgiveness to behold the grace of God. After that a third stage is to follow, "the work of slaying the old man," of dying unto sin. This is impossible as long as a person has not received the forgiveness of sin. . . . The first step on the road to salvation cannot be any "giving" on the part of man, whether it be conceived as the renouncing of sin or the consecration of the heart to God. Such a false step would only put a person further away from his salvation. He will imagine that he must prepare himself by his own work for God's grace. The "treasure" of grace, however, is accessible only to "faith without the deeds of the law." Accordingly, the first step unto salvation can only be the consciousness of poverty, a conscience that has been humbled in the presence of God's anger.

Furthermore, "because of his profound knowledge of sin and his experience through many years, Luther had learned that the Christian is never a finished product but is always in the making." [21]

Lutheran theology has faithfully reproduced the paradoxes of Christianity on the basis of Scripture, without any attempt at reconciling what seem contraries to reason. Paul represents the fullness of the Christian life to be attainable only by "knowing the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." [22]

That is saying, practically, that to the Christian the unknowable becomes known. What is unreasonable to the natural logic of man becomes reasonable to the faith of a believer in Christ. It is logically impossible to explain how there can be in God two distinct wills: the holy and righteous will as expressed by the law, which arrays Him inexorably

[21] 1. c. pp. 188 ff. [22] Eph. 3, 19.

against the wrongdoer, and the good and gracious will of God as expressed in the Gospel, which ceaselessly urges Him to active pity for the wrongdoer and to energetic measures for the wrongdoer's rescue from the wrath to come. Yet these two teachings run parallel through the entire Bible,[23] and are harmonized to us only by the soteriological motive for the incarnation of the Son of God and His vicarious living and dying. It is logically impossible to explain why not all are saved, when all, being equally guilty and corrupt in God's sight, need salvation, when God is lovingly disposed toward all, has prepared salvation for all by the reconciliation of his Son, and impartially extends salvation to all by equally efficacious means. Yet the same Bible teaches the total depravity of the entire human race, the universality of God's redeeming love, the universality of the redeeming work of Christ as regards all sin and all sinners, the universality and equality of the operations of saving grace by the Holy Spirit through the means of grace, and the particular election of those who actually reach the goal of eternal life to which all are pointed.[24] And it demands that we acknowledge in all these activities of God matters inscrutable and past finding out.[25]

In the cozy retirement of the scholar's study, in the smug complacency of easy circumstances and pleasant conditions of life, while the conscience is dormant and no fearful thoughts harass the mind, it is easy to indulge Pelagian views of the innate goodness of human nature. Furthermore, man's natural vanity if fostered by a review of the achievements of the race in the secular field of human enterprise, and amid the admiration and applause which such a review elicits, affords a common mistake of men to regard their natural abilities

[23] See C. F. W. Walther, *The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel,* reproduced from the German edition of 1897, by W. H. T. Dau.

[24] Luther, *De servo arbitrio* (against Erasmus), Weimar Ed. Vol. 18, pp. 551 ff. Walther, Sermon preached on Easter-day, 1851. F. Pieper, Conversion and Election.

[25] Comp. Rom. II, 33-36, with *Form of Concord,* Art. XI. (*Trigl. Concordia,* p. 1063 ff.)

in the routine of their daily pursuits as a criterion of their spiritual ability, and practically to wipe out the border line which separates the realm of nature from the realm of grace. Lastly, the divine law having been written in the heart of man at his creation and constantly asserting its power in men's life, even after the fall and confirming in them the sense of moral duty and obligation, man is always prone to bargain with his Maker and Judge for any favor he desires to obtain from Him. He is by nature a Pharisee and will always seek to secure his rehabilitation with God, his salvation and ultimate bliss in heaven by some synergistic scheme, which allows him to do his share toward salvation, while God does His, and to secure heaven on a coöperative basis.

However all these schemes, calculations, and views of human goodness and merits break down when the profound meaning of the divine law with its categorical imperatives is opened up to man, and the light of eternity is allowed to flood the inmost recesses of his heart and to tear into shreds the veil of secrecy by which he had conveniently hidden the corruptions of his private and inner life from the public gaze and his own scrutiny. At Augsburg, in 1530, Melanchthon confronted his Roman adversaries with this poser:

> Therefore, this conclusion stands like a rock, yea, like a wall, namely, that, although we have begun to do the law, still we are accepted with God and at peace with Him, not on account of such works of ours, but for Christ's sake by faith; nor does God owe us everlasting life on account of these works. But just as forgiveness of sin and righteousness is imputed to us for Christ's sake, not on account of our works, or the law, so everlasting life, together with righteousness, if offered us, not on account of our works, or of the law, but for Christ's sake, as Christ says, John 6, 40: "This is the Father's will that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting

life." Again, verse 47: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Now, *the adversaries should be asked at this point what advice they give to poor consciences* by telling them that they will have a blessed departure, that they will be saved, and have a propitiated God, because of God's grace and mercy for Christ's sake. For St. Peter, St. Paul, and saints like them cannot boast that God owes them eternal life for their martyrdoms, nor have they relied on their works, but on the mercy promised in Christ. *Nor would it be possible that a saint,* great and high though he be, *could make a firm stand against the accusations of the divine law,* the great might of the devil, the terror of death, and, finally, against despair and the anguish of hell, *if he would not grasp the divine promises of the Gospel, as a tree or branch in the great flood, in the strong, violent stream, amidst the waves and billows of death; if he does not cling by faith to the Word, which proclaims grace,* and thus obtains eternal life without works, without the law, from pure grace. For this doctrine alone preserves Christian consciences in afflictions and anguish of death. Of these things the adversaries know nothing, and talk of them like a blind man about color.[26]

The truth of this teaching has been, is now, and will ever be confirmed by every Christian who has made practical experience of the Law and the Gospel. It has been endorsed by the greatest men on earth.[27] Because of this teaching Lutheranism shares with Christianity the glory of perennial worth and imperishable value.

[26] Apology of the Augsburg Conf. *Conc. Trigl.*, p. 212 f.

[27] Comp., f. i., the beautiful inscription on the tomb of the astronomer, Copernicus:

Non parem Pauli gratiam requiro,
Veniam Petri neque posco, sed quam
In crucis ligno, dederas latroni Sedulus oro.

(Not such grace crave I as to Paul Thou grantedst,
Nor ask I Peter's pardon; only such grace
As on the cross Thou on the thief bestowedst I pray with longing.)

This accounts, furthermore, for the strong emphasis which Lutheranism has always placed on *Justification by Grace through Faith,* calling it "the chief topic of Christian doctrine—which is of special service for the clear, correct understanding of the entire Holy Scripture, and alone shows the way to the unspeakable treasure and right knowledge of Christ, and alone opens the door to the entire Bible." [28] This article, *which was the material principle of the Reformation,* will always be cherished by Lutherans as the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiæ,* the doctrine with which the Church either stands or falls, namely, as this doctrine is either maintained or repudiated. For the Church, in the Lutheran view, is the communion of saints, that is the sum total of those in all places and ages who have by faith made the righteousness of Christ their own.[29]

Retention of *the formal principle of the Reformation, viz.,* faith in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God [30] and the only rule and standard of faith and conduct,[31] has until recently been a standing characteristic of the clergy and laity of the Lutheran Church, and is zealously inculcated and defended in her primary and secondary schools. The relation of the authority of the Church to that of the Scriptures is correctly sketched in the following:

> Lutheranism starts with the assertion of the responsibility of the individual conscience to God alone in all matters of faith and life. But, in maintaining this position, it does not proclaim pure individualism, since the conscience is always bound by the Word of God, and that Word is not to be interpreted arbitrarily, but by

[28] Apology, etc., *Conc. Trigl.,* p. 121. Comp. Dau, *Justification.*

[29] In its Third Article the Form of Concord cites Luther's dictum: "If this only article remains pure on the battlefield, the Christian Church also remains pure, and in goodly harmony and without any sects; but if it does not remain pure, it is not possible that any error or fanatical spirit can be resisted." *Conc. Trigl.,* p. 917. Luther's Exposition of Galatians is endorsed in the same article, p. 937.

[30] *Conc. Trigl.,* p. 855f., 965f., 1067f.

[31] *Ibid.,* p. 777, 849.

comparing spiritual things with spiritual.[22] In its treatment of the doctrine of the Church, the emphasis rests not so much upon the external institution, with a well defined organization and codes of ecclesiastical laws, as upon the association of truly Christian people, maintained by their communion in the one faith of the Gospel, through the activity of one and the same Spirit within the hearts and minds. The appeal, accordingly, is never made to the authority of any outward visible organization, but to the individual conscience. All Church power inheres in the Word of God. "This power is exercised only by teaching and preaching the Gospel, and administering the Sacraments." (Augsb. Comp., Art. XXVIII.)[23]

In its relation to the confessional writings of their Church Lutherans have always been careful to distinguish the authority of Scripture as that of the primary norm (*norma normans*) from that of the former as the secondary norm (*norma normata*).

The position accorded the symbols in the Lutheran Church is clearly defined by the Book of Concord itself. According to it Holy Scripture alone is to be regarded as the sole rule and norm by which absolutely all doctrines and teachers are to be judged. The object of the Augustana, as stated in its Preface, was to show "what manner of doctrine has been set forth, in our lands and churches, from the Holy Scriptures and the pure Word of God." And in its Conclusion the Lutheran confessors declare: "Nothing has been received on our part against Scripture or the Church Catholic," and "we are ready, God willing, to present

[22] The context in I Cor. 2:13 shows that the apostle asserts that he is matching his thoughts with his words, both being given him by the Holy Spirit.

[23] H. E. Jacobs, in ERE, Vol. VIII, p. 202.

ampler information according to the Scriptures." "Iuxta Scripturam"—such are the closing word of the Augsburg Confession. The Lutheran Church knows of no other principle.[84]

In the Form of Concord the Lutheran symbols are enumerated, and it is declared that other books are accounted useful, "as far as (*wofern, quatenus*) they are consistent with the Scriptures and the symbols." The symbols, however, are accepted "that we may have a unanimously received, definite, common form of doctrine, which all our Evangelical Churches together and in common confess, from and according to which, because (*cum, weil*) it has been derived from God's Word, all other writings should be judged and adjusted, as to how far (*wiefern, quatenus*) they are to be approved and accepted."[85]

Pledging the ministers of the Church to the Confessions, which became a custom of Lutheran congregations after 1530, is still practiced for the same reasons which Melanchthon asserted against the fanatical attack of Andrew Osiander on the oath of confession demanded of teachers and graduates at Wittenberg. The reasons are: "to maintain the pure doctrine," "correctly to acknowledge God and call upon Him to preserve harmony in the Church, and to bridle the audacity of such as invent new doctrines."[86]

It is understood that the Confessions are human writings, liable to misstatement. If an error is discovered in them, as, for instance, a faulty citation, it is corrected. If the exegesis adopted by the confessors at particular points is weak, it need not be imitated by those who have taken the confessional pledge. If they feel that they cannot subscribe to the teaching of the perpetual virginity of Mary or to the teaching that the Roman Papacy is the antichrist predicted

[84] F. Bente, in Introduction to *Conc. Trigl.*, p. 7; comp. *Conc. Trigl.* 777, 2; 114, 9; 95, 6; 529; 503, 13, 27; 847, 4, 5; 851, 5; 852.
[85] *Conc. Trigl.*, p. 855, 10.
[86] *Corpus Reformatorum*, 12, 5.

in Scripture, they should state so at the time of their induction into the office, and at any rate specify their dissensions from the credal statements of their Church, in order that the extent and limit of their dissension may be plainly understood and the Church can intelligently address itself to the task of removing the dissension, if possible. A wholesale declaration that one accepts the Lutheran Confessions "as far as" they agree with the Scriptures, not only throws suspicion on these Confessions, but also opens the door to doctrinal latitudinarianism and insincerity.[37]

The well-known position of orthodox Lutheranism on the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures [38] is being weakened in our days by the inroads which rationalism in the garb of science is making on the professional theology of the Church and, to some extent on its laymen. This will call for a restatement, or redefinition, on the part of the Lutheran Church of to-day regarding the use of reason in theology. If the necessity of a divine revelation of matters that transcend reason is admitted, and if, besides, the finite character of all scientific inquiry and research is granted, there will be no conflict between reason and revelation, science and religion, but each of these respectable pursuits of the human mind will work in amicable fellowship with the other. That is not only the desirable, but also the natural and logical relationship between the two. For the same God who creates in men's hearts by His Holy Spirit through His Word "the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen" (Hebr. 11. 1) which form the contents of His written revelation, has given man his reason for the purpose, amongst other things, that he "should seek the Lord, if haply he might feel after Him and find Him." (Acts 17. 27). He has, moreover, bidden man to work

[37] See Walther, *Antwort auf die Frage. Warum sind die symbolischen Buecher unserer Kirche von denen, welche Diener derselben werden wollen, unbedingt zu unterschreiben?*

[38] See Dietrichson, *Den hele Skrift indblaest af Gud*, soon to be out in an enlarged English edition by W. H. T. Dau.

continually, persistently and energetically at his primeval task of subduing the earth, has promised each faithful laborer His blessing and a due reward of his labor, and wants men to ask for that blessing and reward. It is not only theoretically but actually possible to be a postgraduate and expert in chemistry and at the same time a devout reader of Scripture; to push geological and astronomical research to the limit of twentieth-century possibilities and at the same time be a reverent worshiper at God's house; to be steeped in the knowledge of all scientific lore and an appreciative attendant at the Lord's Table and an active church member. The Lutheran Church holds many such men and women in her membership, and knows herself in full agreement with the best thought of the modern scientific world.[89]

It is only with the unproven claims of science, its hypotheses and tentative theories which have not been matured, that the Lutheran Church has a conflict. This conflict is the age-long conflict that the Church has had to wage since the gates of paradise were closed with the skepticism and the forces of negation that keep suggesting: "Yea, hath God said?" History has a funny habit of repeating itself. Its changing phenomena are outworkings of unchanging laws. Yesterday is certainly mirrored in to-day, and to-day will be reflected in to-morrow. Garbs change, but not the men that wear them. Each generation indulges in new emphases and is more or less artificially enthused by new slogans, but the selfish particularism back of them is world-old. We bow in acknowledgment to old Akiba's famous dictum, and admit its application also to the developments of church history.

Eighteen years ago a group of European scholars within the evangelical state churches of Germany came forward with a protest against the ignorantly acclaimed "progress" of modern science in its conflicts with the holy writings and

[89] See Dau, *The Testimony of Science,* and *Must the Church Surrender to Unbelief?*

the truths of the Christian religion.[40] They showed that "the modern battles of the Church have been fought once before, and modern enemies have been conquered once before." Moreover, in her former conflicts the Church has forged weapons that are too little known and used to-day. It is time that the old arsensals are thrown open.

There is no reason why any Lutheran in view of the new *isma* and vagaries of our times should think of revising the creed and doctrinal attitude of his Church, but there is every reason why he should cling to the heritage of sound, pure doctrine and excellent evangelical church polities that have been bequeathed upon him by a great past. To repeat the words of Mark Hopkins with a slight change of phraseology: If in the chaos of wrecked beliefs and tottering churches the Lutheran Church too should have to be junked, there would ensue a worse than Egyptian darkness.

Let every criticism of her doctrinal positions be fairly examined, let scientific research continue unhampered and unhindered and push our reliable knowledge to new confines every year, let the insistence on *reine Lehre* that has been typical of conscious, consistent, militant Lutheranism continue—all this is as it should be. Especially, as regards *reine Lehre:* nobody wants any other kind of teaching and admits that the Church's stamina of virility lie in her great Christ-centered and soteriologically oriented doctrines. The Lutheran Church can render an incalculable service to Christianity in our questioning, doubting, vacillating times by holding aloft her evangelical standards that were the hope and the joy of former generations of men.[41]

Adolf Hausrath has reminded us of the debt which

[40] *Moderne Irrtuemer im Spiegel der Geschichte. Bilder aus der Geschichte des Kampfes der religioesen Richtungen, herausgegeben von Wilhelm Laible.*

[41] See Walther, *Die Kirche der Reformation: der vorbildlich geweissagte zweite Tempel des Neuen Bundes,* and *Warum duerfen und Koennen wir den Kampf um die reine Lehre unserer Kirche immer noch nicht aufgeben?* F. Pieper, *Die Reformation nicht ein Uebel, sondern der groesste Segen fuer Kirche und Staat.*

Lutheranism still owes to Luther's dynamic personality and the immortal vitality of his writings. "Among the vital forces which hold present-day Protestantism together we must place in the front rank the common homage paid to Luther's heroic personality. In him the Liberal Protestant beholds the great champion of liberty who has broken the yoke of the papacy; the Old Time Believer sees in him the restorer of the biblical life of faith that had been buried beneath medieval doctrines of men. The educated person bows before him as the creator of modern culture, the common people are edified by Luther's Bible and Luther's hymns. Accordingly, profession of allegiance to Luther has in our day a greater binding power than those official confessions which belong more or less to a past age." [42] There is truth in this remark but also an undervaluation of the Lutheran Confessions even in our materialistic, indifferentistic and syncretistic age. The Confessions and the inculcation of doctrine have made the Lutheran Church in America great. If Lutherans do not foolishly persist in merging their ecclesiastical identity in that nondescript product of the times which purports to offer the best of every religion and on close inspection is found to be the natural religion of pagans with a Christian label—if Lutherans will not try to learn from the sects, or obtain recognition and praise from the sects, but will patiently teach the sects the real meaning of Martin Luther's work, they will help thereby to improve the entire Christian Church. For Martin Luther belongs not only to a few Germans and Scandinavians and Americans but to the entire world of men for whom he fought his spiritual battles and performed his peaceful reconstruction of the church.[43]

[42] Preface to *Life of Luther*, Vol. I, p. vii.

[43] See Walther, *Warum sollen wir uns Luthers, dessen Namen wir tragen, nicht schaemen?*

WHAT IS LUTHERANISM?

X

C. A. WENDELL

[EUROPEAN visitors have more than once expressed surprise in observing the striking homogeneity of ecclesiastical and theological thought that characterize the clergy of the Augustana Synod (an organization representing for the most part Lutherans, in America, of Swedish extraction). Although to a large extent true, it is not wholly so. Here and there within this great body are to be found those independent spirits whose very nature forbids their falling unreservedly into what social psychologists have called "the group mind." Among these few, Dr. Wendell has been classed, but not without honor to himself. Loyalty to the Church of his heritage has not meant for him unmitigable conformity but the giving wholeheartedly of his own individuality. In so doing the Church he has served has been the beneficiary, by a ministry that has been richer.

He was born in Sweden, April 24, 1866, and brought to this country at a budding age. His academic training he received at Augustana College, graduating in 1893 with a B.A. and an M.A. in 1897. A brief teaching career followed. After his ordination by the Augustana Synod in 1905 he began a six-year fruitful ministry in the Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Rockford, Illinois. Following a three-year pastorate in Evanston, Illinois (1911-1914), at which time he pursued studies at Northwestern University, Dr. Wendell moved to Minneapolis, where for fifteen years he has ministered so successfully on the very edge of the University campus.

His parish, largely academic and cosmopolitan in character, has brought him face to face with the living issues of modern thought and has given him a fine opportunity to assert a constructive spiritual leadership in harmony with the best in that thought. The Lutheran Church through him has continued to hold and to exert a wholesome influence upon a large number of university-trained young folk in the northwest. That his leadership in later years has taken on more and more a prophetic note is attested to by a number of his published articles in the religious press and especially by the publication, in 1923, of *The Larger Vision,* in which he sought to defend modern science and especially the theory of evolution against the attacks of fundamentalistic polemicists.

His lectures are popular with discriminating young people. Besides appearing frequently at Young People's Conventions, Bible Institutes, etc., he has represented the Religious Workers' Council in its University Extension courses at Minnesota. The synod has honored him with many positions of trust, recognizing especially his literary talents by placing him on many of its important publication committees. His *Little Journeys,* a series of studies in Church history for young people, is a widely used text in the Church.

In 1928 Gustavus Adolphus College fittingly conferred on him the degree, Doctor of Letters.—*The Editor.*]

It was in Chicago. Twelve or fourteen prominent Lutherans were assembled for the purpose of trying to find the best way of helping college and university students maintain their Christian faith. Naturally the Lutheran Church, the Lutheran viewpoint, the Lutheran heritage and the like occupied a prominent place in the foreground of the discussion. Everybody seemed to take for granted that everybody understood what everybody means by Lutheranism, until some one broke loose with an abrupt, "What on earth *is* Lutheranism anyhow?"

The chairman kept his calm, as a chairman should, but from a dusky corner came a little grunt and a half indignant, "Why, you certainly know that!"

"I suppose I should," admitted the questioner, "but I am not sure that I do. Tell me, ye who know, who are we anyhow, and why? What's peculiar about us? Wherein do we differ from other Christians—if there be any others? Why do we hold ourselves aloof from everybody else? Are we saintlier than the rest? Or wiser? Do we have some esoteric insight which only a Lutheran can attain? Are we the special pets of the Lord, or why do we exist? Really, I am puzzled. What is a Lutheran anyway?"

"To be a Lutheran," said one, "is to adhere unfalteringly to the word of God as the only rule of faith and conduct."

"Ah, now!" protested another, "you don't mean to tell us

that we are the only ones who believe that?" To which there was no reply.

"No," said still another, "I think the real mark of a true Lutheran is his sound evangelism. Ours is the truly evangelical Church." But that, too, was rejected. We may be evangelical, it was held, but we are certainly not the only ones.

The Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper was proposed as the true mark of distinction, but even that was refused. One suggested Luther's Catechism and another one the confession of sins in our liturgical form of worship, but nothing stood the test. At the close of it all the original questioner declared that he was more at sea than ever before and said that the only thing he was fairly sure of now was that we are not Mohammedans!

After such an experience one may be pardoned for hesitating to attempt a definition of Lutheranism, for these men were no novices. They were all well trained in Lutheran theology and had all been ordained to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ "according to our evangelical Lutheran confessions." We doubt not that with more time for deliberation every one of them could have met the question with better balance, but offhand they failed. And they are not the only ones who have failed. The very existence of the present symposium indicates that. Evidently the question is still open—or shall we say once more open—for discussion.

This is all the more surprising in view of the history of the Lutheran Church, for there is nothing hazy about that. She did not tiptoe into the world. She was born in a most heroic age, amid titanic forces of good and evil. She had to fight for her existence. She had to declare and identify herself. Men demanded an account of the faith that was in her, and she gave it gladly. She became precise in her statements. She produced great dogmaticians who chiseled out her creed with micrometric precision and laid such stress upon *die reine Lehre* that they sometimes laid themselves open to the

charge of putting their dogmas where Luther had put the Bible. And yet, to-day, men are asking, What is Lutheranism? as if the answer had never been given. And it is not outsiders but Lutherans themselves who are asking.

What has happened?

In one direction, nothing whatever; in another, a profound, far-reaching revolution. The great Confessions of the Lutheran Church are unaltered and unalterable. They are as unchangeable as the Constitution of the United States. We may add to the Constitution; we might even discard it and adopt something entirely different if we so desired; but as an historical document it is there to stay. Even so with our Confession of Faith. Like a beetle imbedded in amber it is fixed forever. But the immobility of the beetle does not produce immobility in the environment, and the fixity of our Confession does not stem the tide of events. We may glory in the "Unaltered Augsburg Confession," but the world into which it was flung has been profoundly altered. Men are asking once more for a definition of Lutheranism, but we shall never be able to give it until we understand why they are asking, and we shall never understand that unless we take into account the storm of new ideas that has swept the world since Luther's time—and is still raging.

Cosmogony, for example. How radically different ours is from that of Luther's contemporaries. To them the earth was the center of the universe, the sun was a small thing in comparison, the moon was a convenience on a dark night, and the little pin pricks called stars were there for man's delight. It was a cozy little universe, with heaven so near you could almost touch it, and God so nigh you could hear His voice in the rolling thunder. But the modern astronomer smiles at all this. To him the universe is an immeasurable vastness. "The sun would hold a million globes the size of the earth," he tells us, "yet in comparison with the stars it is only a little dwarf. And the nearest of the stars (not including the sun, which is itself a star) is so far away that it takes light, traveling at the rate of 186,000 miles per second,

four years and four months to reach us, while others require five or ten million years." For ages men have spoken of "heaven above," but that sounds odd in the astronomer's ears, for "in interstellar space there is neither up nor down," he tells us. The whilom "center of the universe" turns out to be a "speck of cosmic dust floating among the stars," while man, the "lord of creation," dwindles to a mere bacillus. And now he puzzles his bewildered little head with "the modern view of the Incarnation," the "modern view of the efficacy of prayer," and a hundred other "modern" perplexities which did not exist in the minds of his ancestors.

Or the age of the world. Luther's contemporaries believed that heaven and earth were created about four thousand years before Christ. The archæologist of to-day displays pottery, statuary, jewelry, weapons and what not, which, he assures us, was made by human hands a thousand years or more before the date set by Bishop Usher and others for the creation of the world. The anthropologist looks five or ten times farther back than that and "still finds evidence of human life and human skill." And the geologist talks time in terms so vast that years become cumbersome, as inches would in measuring interstellar distances. He talks of eras, eons, ages and periods. He tells us (if we insist on puttering with time-inches) that it must be at least fifty million years since organic life first appeared upon the earth. The old archæology was little and limited and comfortable. The morning stars had hardly ceased to sing, and the dawn of the first day had hardly faded from the sky. But this modern reckoning is too vast for comprehension. It staggers the imagination. It overwhelms and terrifies. And yet, though the great authorities differ by millions of years, they all agree on the vastness of it.

Or the processes of life.[1] According to Luther's con-

[1] We are not here entering upon any discussion of the problems which have stirred up such a tempest in the world. We are simply pointing to them and calling attention to the changes that have taken place in the thoughts of men and which are partly responsible for the recurrence of the question considered in this symposium.

temporaries all organic forms were created, such as they are, now, during the last four days of the creative week. Each was the result of a divine *fiat*. Dead matter heard the voice of God and shaped itself willingly into the forms desired. "Let there be—and there was." The crowning glory was the creation of man. On the sixth day, after finishing the rest of the creative work, God took a mass of clay and made man, in His own image; then, by a process still more astonishing, a woman to be his helpmeet. These two He endowed with physical, mental and moral perfection and placed them in a garden of perfect beauty and bliss, where sin and sorrow and death were unknown. It was a divine romance, lovely as a dream and full of comforting implications. Possibly the fathers read some things between the lines which are not there, but be that as it may, the modern biologist shakes his head both at the lines and the spaces between them, and declares that "a thousand undeniable facts point in a radically different direction." He says that neither plants nor animals were originally what they are now. "They were mere embryos of the present forms. Through millions of years they have been molded and shaped to what they now are." And he includes man in his theory. "Man," he says, "was not completed in twenty-four hours or less, and did not come forth ready made as we know him now. He reached his present status by a long, long process of development, and is still on the way."

The age-old problem of suffering, sickness and death found naïve solution in the minds of the fathers. They looked wistfully toward a lost Paradise. They saw the tree of Life and the fateful tree of knowledge. They saw the coming of the serpent and heard his seductive speech; heard Eve argue with him; saw her weaken, reach out her hand and take of the forbidden fruit, then persuade her husband to join her in sinning. They saw the consequences, too—the expulsion from Eden and the coming of "all the ills that flesh is heir to," culminating in that dreadful experience called

death—death to blossom, beast and man; for when the lord of creation fell he drew all the other creatures with him. . . . But again the scientist shakes his head. "Not so," he tells us. "Death cannot be the result of anything that man has done, for death was in the world millions of years before man ever appeared. Ever since organic life arose, death has been as common as birth. The rocks bear unmistakable evidence of that."

Not even the Holy Scriptures have escaped the daring of this modern spirit. The fathers took the Bible as it was, and lived by it and died by it. To them it was evident that Moses wrote the first five books and embodied in them the Law which God had revealed to him. The Prophets came later, warning the people of coming judgment if they obeyed not the Law. And every word was inspired of God. It was all a divine revelation and a blessed means of grace. But the modern "Higher Critic" has a different view. He holds that after much fumbling and groping the Hebrew people brought forth a galaxy of religious leaders known as Nebiim (Prophets) who "brought to light far nobler ideas of God than the earlier generations had known." The Law, he would have us understand, was a rule of conduct by which the theology of the Nebiim was to be put into practice. And "the basic ideas of the Law were derived from Babylonia, notably from the code of Hammurabi who antedated Moses by almost a thousand years. But it was put into its present form by priests who lived a thousand years after Moses." And so the Bible, instead of being God's word to man, becomes a record of man's groping after God, "if haply he might feel after Him and find Him."

This and much else of a similar nature goes into what is commonly called modernism. We cannot pause here to consider the meaning of that movement—whether it be a veritable "blast from hell," as the Pope and the fundamentalists claim, or only a strong wind sent forth to winnow the chaff from the wheat, as others believe. We can only point

out that it has swept the landscape of the traditional faith like a roaring cyclone, that it is still raging, and that it has not weakened in power during recent decades.

In the midst of it stands the House of Faith called Lutheranism, and many are wondering what will happen to it. Will it stand the strain? Will it survive the storm?

Let us look for a moment at those who dwell within, who are most directly concerned with its destiny, and who should do all they can to bolster and steady it against the onslaught of the tempest. They are all "Lutherans," yet they are divided into a score of separate groups called synods. The partitions between them remind one less of dignified walls than of barb-wire fences in which the posts are officeholders, the wires nationalistic and provincial peculiarities, and the barbs personal animosities. As far as possible each group has its own hymnal, its own liturgy, its own Bible history, catechism, Sunday-school supplies and church periodicals. In various externals they differ widely. In one section the pulpit and the lectern are side by side; in another the lectern would seem like an intruder. In one section the minister wears a "Luther gown" without a surplice; in another he adds a surplice and a stole; in a third he wears a modified Prince Albert with a military collar. In one he wears a "millstone" ruffle around his neck; in another a funny little bifurcated bib under the chin; and in a third merely a black front where other men wear white. To a small extent these outward forms may cross the fences and wander from one group to another, but not very often. Generally speaking, a Lutheran minister could not officiate at the altar of any synod but his own, even if he were allowed, because he would not know the intricacies of the liturgy used there. The various groups are deeply self-conscious, self-satisfied, and altogether independent of one another. If they ever coöperate they do it after the manner of marbles—by cold contact or by more or less violent collision. One of them is hardly on speaking terms with any of its neighbors.

In a recent address in St. Paul, Minn., Dr. P. O. Bersell[8] depicted the confusion in the American Lutheran Church as follows:

> One Lutheran group bars members of secret orders from the altar. Another group ordains such to the holy ministry.
>
> One group practices the so-called Galesburg Rule, "Lutheran altars and pulpits for Lutherans only." Another is ultra-unionistic.
>
> One endorses prohibition and the Volstead Act. Another opposes these measures. I hold in my hand a clipping of yesterday from the *Tribune,* not the Chicago but the Minneapolis *Tribune,* which features a statement of a Lutheran leader, "that Lutherans do not believe in the principles that underlie the Volstead laws."
>
> One group labels dancing, card playing and kindred evils as inventions of the devil and pitfalls of hell. Another promotes dancing in church halls and church colleges and seminaries.
>
> One group says, "We stand on the unaltered Augsburg Confession." Another says, "We are the only true Lutherans and therefore we cannot even worship or pray with other Lutherans." And this is said by those who teach and preach a doctrine of predestination that is more Calvinistic than Lutheran.
>
> One requires Lutheran confession or Lutheran confirmation as a prerequisite for communicant membership. Another receives members by letter from Reformed Churches, with no questions asked.
>
> One group believes in ritual and sanctuary vestments, another has no use for such things.

The external variations can be defended by the Augsburg Confession, which says explicitly that it is not necessary that

[8] A clergyman of the Augustana Synod and prominent leader in "The American Federation of Lutheran Brotherhoods."—EDITOR.

"human traditions, rites, or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike." But the mischief of it is that the common man, untrained in ecclesiastical subtleties, is liable to identify the true faith with the millstone or the bib or the black front; and when his Lutheran neighbor (who may be an excellent man but whose pastor's neck is not ornamented with the same device as that of his own pastor) also claims to be a true Lutheran, both of them are apt to become a bit confused. When twenty different sections clamor for recognition, claiming to be orthodox above all others, one cannot wonder that some people exclaim, "What on earth *is* Lutheranism anyhow?"

It is not an idle question for a theological pastime. It is vital and serious. For in the Lutheran House of Faith most of us Lutherans were born, there we grew up, and there we feel at home. When we learn that "the rain is descending, and the floods have come, and the winds are blowing, and beating upon that house," we are anxious to know what will happen to it. If it were to go down it would leave many of us without a home, and some of us in a worse plight than that.

If the construction of the house is faulty, of course it will not stand the strain; but it is remarkable that when Jesus spoke of the wise and the foolish builders he said nothing about construction. Assuming that that was satisfactory, he argues that the fate of the building will depend upon the foundation upon which it is built. And since the present symposium is not concerned with externals and non-essentials but with basic principles, we may proceed to examine the underlying foundation. What is *that?*

Some people would answer without hesitation, "The Book of Concord. For none but Lutherans adhere to that, and all true Lutherans do. Therefore, that is the distinguishing mark of Lutheranism."

In a certain sense this is true, of course. And the importance of the Book of Concord has been amply emphasized

by the theologians. Hollazius, for example, says, "The Symbolical Books are necessary, not absolutely but hypothetically, for the condition of the Church, which was induced by weighty reasons to their publication, (a) to establish solid, permanent, and firm concord in the Church of God, so that there may be a certain compendious form or type approved by universal consent, in which the common doctrine, which the Churches of the purer doctrine profess, collected from the Word of God, may be contained; (b) to furnish an account of the Christian religion, if it be demanded by the civil authority; (c) to distinguish the true member of the Church from her enemies, the heretics, and schismatics." Adherence to the Symbolical Books may be a *mark* by which we are distinguished from all other Christians, but as already stated, we are not here dealing with marks but with essentials. And the Symbolical Books are not the final foundation. They are, as the Formula of Concord itself says, "only a witness and declaration of the faith, as to how at any time the Holy Scriptures have been understood and explained in the articles in controversy in the Church of God by those who then lived." And "the Holy Scriptures alone remain the only judge, rule, and standard according to which, as the only test-stone, all dogmas should and must be discerned and judged, as to whether they are good or evil, right or wrong."[3]

However precious, therefore, these Confessions may be to a conservative Lutheran, and however squarely the Lutheran Church may rest upon them, they are not the final foundation. For underneath all of them is the Word of God, the supreme judge of all dogmas. Each in its own place, the Symbolical Books as a "witness and declaration of the faith" of those who wrote them, and underneath them the divine substratum of the Holy Scriptures.

To the substratum then let us turn. We call it the Word of God, a term which embodies the experience of innumer-

[3] *Book of Concord,* Jacobs' Ed., 1916, p. 492.

able needy souls to whom God has spoken through that Word. To sing its praises is to repeat platitudes, for it is almost impossible to find a word of admiration which has not already been used over and over again. Who, indeed, can do justice to that blessed Book? While the sun is shining and all is well we may look to Shakespeare for companionship (and what a companion he is!), but when death arrives and sorrow enters, what is Shakespeare then? "Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me" came from a Greater than the bard of Avon. In a philosophical mood we may turn to Plato, with wonder at his insight, but when a wounded conscience writhes in agony Plato has no word of peace. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" is not his; for that we turn to the Book of God. Medical science has done wonders, but when the "inner man" discovers that morally, not physically, "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint," medical science is helpless. For such ailments we turn to God's *materia medica,* and through that to Him who "healeth all thy diseases." A certain mother whose daughter had just died, and who herself seemed near death at the time, asked her pastor to read some word of consolation. "What shall I read?" he asked. She was a woman of culture who could appreciate Browning and Tennyson and Walt Whitman, but none of them came to her mind at that moment. "Read the twenty-third Psalm," she replied, "and then—isn't it John ten, where the Good Shepherd speaks? I always want that to follow the Psalm." It all reveals the real purpose of the Book. Yet even that is not all, for besides satisfying the deepest needs of the human heart the Word has gone forth, like an overflowing river, and enriched every field of human culture. Gothic architecture, Renaissance painting, modern music, sculpture, and literature have all been deeply influenced by the Holy Scriptures, and some, like Gothic architecture, are the direct offspring thereof. Meanwhile the still small voice of it has kept on calling to the conscience of humanity till refinement,

sympathy, justice and brotherly love have begun to blossom on the earth.

But even here we may go too far. Our very veneration for the Scriptures may lead us to excess. Bibliolatry is perhaps the finest and most exalted form of idolatry, but idolatry it is nevertheless. It is not the Bible but God Himself who says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." A stilted veneration for the Word betrays an inward weakness rather than a virile faith, and out of it proceeds a nervous anxiety to prove the "complete inerrancy" of the Bible "from cover to cover." This may be good Fundamentalism but hardly good Lutheranism, for Luther was not of that type. That his faith in the Word of God was firm and profound, no one can doubt who is in some degree acquainted with him, but it was a vigorous and fearless faith. His acquaintance with the Bible was so intimate, and his admiration so profound, that he was not at all worried over finding an occasional flaw on the human side of it. He treasured it above all other possessions, but he did not fall down and worship it. To him it was a *means* of grace, not a goal or a God. Nor did he fret and fuss to prove its alleged "inerrancy from cover to cover." He did not claim inerrancy for it. "*Johannis macht hie eine verwirrung*" ("John is confused here," in other words, makes a mistake), he says in one of his sermons.[4] Speaking of the Old Testament Prophets he says, "When they told of kings and worldly events, as they also did, they often made mistakes."[5] As to the veracity of the books of Chronicles he declares that "the books of Kings are a hundred thousand times more trustworthy than the Chronicles."[6] His general attitude toward the question of inerrancy may perhaps be inferred from what he says about the fact that Matthew attributes to Jeremiah, a quotation which is found in Zechariah. The quotation occurs in Matthew 27. 9, but it

[4] *Wochenpredigten über Joh. 16-20,* 1528-1529, Weimar Aufl., XXVIII, 269.
[5] *Kirchenpostille über Epistl.,* Erlangen Aufl., VIII, 23.
[6] *Tischreden,* Erl. Aufl., LXII, 132.

does not appear anywhere in Jeremiah, though Matthew says that it does. It does appear, though far from verbatim, in Zechariah 11. 12, 13. Luther dismisses the matter with, *"Zwar solche und dergleiche Fragen bekümmern mich nicht hoch"* ("Such questions do not worry me much").[7] Nor does he hesitate to subject the various books of the Bible to fearless scrutiny. He weighs and balances them in his Christ-enlightened judgment and finds a number of them wanting. He thoroughly disliked the book of Esther and wished that it had "not come to us at all."[8] The style of the Epistle of James is, in Luther's opinion, "considerably below the apostolic majesty and not to be compared to that of Paul."[9] Of the book of Revelation he says, *"Mein Geist kann sich in das Buch nicht schicken"* ("My spirit cannot find itself at ease in that book"),[10] and the Epistle of James is not orthodox—"not in full accord with pure doctrine."[11]

Of the Scriptures as a whole, so far as the external or human side is concerned, Luther uses expressions that seem nothing short of irreverent. He calls them *"schlecht und geringe"!* I am at a loss how to translate that. There is no English word for *"schlecht."* The dictionaries offer a dozen synonyms, but all of them are too harsh for the present connection. The mildest word one might use and still be within range of his meaning would be *rough, rude, coarse,* or the like. Evidently he was not given to indiscriminate bibliolatry, though he did sincerely revere the Bible, and for reasons that we shall see when we return to his *"schlecht und geringe"* and get it in its proper setting.

Lutherolatry (for there is such a thing, too!), anxious to put before us a "nice" Luther who is always on dress parade and never says anything shocking, naturally feels upset by such utterances as we have here quoted. It seeks refuge in

[7] *Auslegung des Propheten Sacharja*, 1527, Erl. Aufl., XLII, 330.
[8] *Luther's Table Talk*, Hazlitt's tr., Luth. Pub. Soc'y, p. 13.
[9] *Resol. super. prop. Lipsiæ disp.*, Weimar Aufl., II, 425.
[10] Erl. Aufl., LXIII, 170.
[11] *Epistelpostille*, Erl. Aufl., VIII, 268.

the theory that they belong to his early and immature years, and that he modified them later on and became properly conservative. But Chevalier Bunsen, high authority on things Lutheran, assures us that many, if not all, of his criticisms of the Bible recur "in writings formally expounding his last and most mature opinions." [12]

Besides, in his use of the Bible, Luther was remarkably free from the vagaries into which others have fallen. "Prophetism," for example, did not appeal to him. He valued the Old Testament Prophets not as foretellers of coming events, but as forthtellers of the deep purposes of God. Speaking of the former, he says, "However much these predictions may satisfy curiosity, foretelling how kings and princes and worldly estates will fare, they are needless in New Testament times; for they do not further the Christian faith." Nor did he seem to have much respect for the modern "prophets" who win notoriety by attempting to "throw the search light of the Word of God upon the great historic movements" and pretend that in that light they can interpret not only the past and the present, but foretell coming events, revealing to an astonished world that "the Bible has foretold the automobile, the airplane, the League of Nations, etc." For it seems to be this he has in mind when he says that it is "almost one of the least of the gifts of God, and sometimes the devil is the source of it." [13]

Nor does he seem to favor the idea of using the Bible as a textbook of natural science either. For it is recorded that when some one asked him: "Doctor, the Scriptures say that God made two great lights and fixed all the stars in the firmament; the astronomers, on the other hand, say that the moon is the least and lowest of the stars. Which shall we believe, the authority of the Scriptures or the demonstrations of astronomy?" Luther answered: "From the theory of eclipses, which is supported by accurate demonstration, we are con-

[12] Bunsen's *Life of Martin Luther*, Hurd & Houghton, 1877, p. 250.
[13] *Kirchenpostille zu Epist.*, Erl. Aufl., VIII, 22.

vinced that astronomical theories ought not to be rejected. I believe, therefore, that Moses spoke according to our power of comprehension, describing the moon as it seems to us." [14] From which it appears that he not only accepted demonstrated facts of nature but that he did not suffer from the fear of scientific theory, which is now so rampant in certain sections of Christendom.

And yet, how he loved the old Book! In a reminiscent mood he said one day, harking back to his student days when he first got acquainted with it, "My soul would burn to get back to the Bible." And many years later, with better understanding and a deeper appreciation of its contents, he said, "I should prefer all my books to perish that only the Bible might be read, for other books take up our attention and make us neglect the Bible." [15] But how is one to fit his "*schlecht und geringe*" into such adoration? Looking in another direction we may ask, "Why did Mr. X. pay four hundred dollars for a very ordinary looking oyster?" Because within it was a very precious pearl. The Bible may be externally rough and rude, but "*Hie wirst du die Windeln und die Krippen finden, da Christus innen liegt, dahin auch der Engel die Hirten weiset. Schlecht und geringe Windel sind es, aber theur ist der schatz, Christus, der drinnen liegt*" ("Here you find the swaddling cloth and the manger in which Christ lies, and to which the angel directed the shepherds. Rude and unpretentious is the swaddling cloth, but precious is the treasure, Christ, which lies therein." [16] That is the secret of Luther's love for the Bible. That is what made it so precious to him—not its literary beauty, not its philosophical insight, not its historical or scientific value, not its alleged "inerrancy from cover to cover," but Christ who dwells within.

Over and over again he returns to that thought. "I see nothing in the Scriptures but Christ the crucified," he tells

[14] Preserved Smith's *Conversations with Luther*, 1915, p. 103.
[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 179.
[16] Erl. Aufl., LXIII, 8.

us.[17] "Take Christ out of the Scriptures, and what is left?" [18] "Undeniably the entire Scripture points only to Christ." [19] "Christ is the center of the circle, and rightly understood all the narratives refer to Him." [20] "Christ is the sun and truth of the Scriptures." [21] And in the Historical Introduction to the intersynodical version of Luther's Small Catechism, Mattes and Reu point out that in the Catechism "all centers around Jesus Christ and our need of His atonement." [22] This is an important observation, for Luther's Small Catechism is one of the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, and though Luther may not be identical with Lutheranism, yet in the deepest essentials he is doubtless its truest exponent.

Here, then, is the nethermost foundation, Jesus Christ. And "other foundation can no man lay." Verily, Luther was a "wise man, who built his house upon the rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and . . ." May we not venture the prediction that in ages to come men will add, "and it fell not"?

What, then, is Lutheranism?

Each contributor to the present symposium will, of course, answer the question in his own way, and it is possible that the reader will lay the book down with a disappointed, "So many writers, so many views. What on earth *is* Lutheranism anyhow?" It is even conceivable that he will say with the questioner in our introductory anecdote, "Now I am more at sea than ever before, and the only thing I am fairly sure of now is that we are not Mohammedans." But nevertheless there must be something in Lutheranism which holds it together or it would have fallen asunder long ago. Diversity there is, enough and to spare, and yet there must be some

[17] *Dictata super Psalterium,* Weimar Aufl., IV, 153.
[18] *De Servo Arbitrio,* Erl. Aufl., VII, 125.
[19] *Von Menschenlehre zu meiden,* Weimar Aufl., XII, 73.
[20] *Auslegung der 3 und 4 Cap. Johannis,* Weimar Aufl., XLVII, 66.
[21] *Dictata super Psalterium,* Weimar Aufl., III, 620.
[22] P. 49.

underlying unity. "I dare say, without fear of successful contradiction," said Dr. Bersell in the address from which we already have quoted, "that there is no great church body in the United States to-day that is so one in spirit, in faith, and in practice as the Lutheran Church." What is the secret of this? Let us approach it by eliminating this and that which Lutheranism is *not.*

First of all it is not *primarily* adherence to the Lutheran Confessions, for they are merely witnesses to the truth as understood by those who wrote them. That is all they themselves claim, and no man has a right to make shackles or prison bars out of them. They are a clear and concise expression of the faith of the Lutheran Church, but they are not the inspired Word of God. They are not the deepest foundation upon which she rests.

It is not *primarily* devotion to the Holy Scriptures. For though the Lutheran Church reveres them and could not be herself without them, she considers them as a means of grace, not grace itself. They are the Word of God, not the God who spoke the Word. They are to be used, not worshiped; and they are to be used with reverence, humility, and spiritual appreciation. For they are not so many bricks to be hurled at the heads of those who may differ with us, or so many rocks wherewith we may block the way of such progress as God may set before His people.

It is not Modernism, as most people understand that word. The bleached Christ, the humanized Scriptures, the impotent cross, the empty sacraments, and rationalized faith, and the utter inability to bring sinners to repentance and salvation, which so largely characterizes modernism, this is utterly and forever incompatible with sound Lutheranism.

But neither is it Fundamentalism, as that word is usually understood. How, for example, would you harmonize the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith with the fundamentalist faith in salvation by State legislation? (That may be putting it bluntly but not, we think, incorrectly, for actions

talk louder than words and we judge by the actions.) The Lutheran Church, in so far as she is true to her own doctrines, is evangelical. She appeals to the conscience and tries to win by inward persuasion, not by outward compulsion. Fundamentalism is legalistic. It tells people what they may do and not do, believe and not believe; and in the midst of its "evangelism" it is forever seeking legislative control to enforce its ideas. In its use of the Holy Scriptures it has an uncanny habit of building much of its faith on precisely those parts which are least understood and upon which the Lutheran Church never has built extensively. That many "Lutherans" in America are typical fundamentalists is an open secret, but the Church is certainly not. They drink at other fountains. *The Christian Fundamentalist, Our Hope,* the Bible Institute of Los Angeles and other fundamentalist institutions and publications, these constitute the source of their inspiration, and thence comes the water they offer young Lutherans who thirst after God. That there is much good in it we do not deny, but its bizarre exegeses and its theological extravagances are utterly foreign to the spirit of the Church in whose name these things are offered.

Nor is the Lutheran Church tied up with nationalism or national leaders. It is neither English nor German, neither Norwegian nor Swedish. It is neither Luther nor Melanchthon, neither Walther nor Hauge nor Passavant nor Hasselquist. It transcends them all. It is genuinely catholic, that is universal, for it proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ which is for all men in all climes at all times. It uses all languages and feels at home in all countries.

If we were to answer the question of the present symposium in a sentence, we should attempt a characterization rather than a definition, and we should say that Lutheranism is Christo-centric. If the objection were made that that is not Lutheranism, specifically, but Christianity in its widest sense; that it is too vague and too inclusive; that it does not distinguish us from other sections of Christendom and therefore

is off the subject of the discussion, we should reply that we are not interested in sects and sections. We have no desire to emphasize the differences that keep us apart from all others, but we are vitally interested in the basis of our existence. The Lutheran Church does not like to be called a sect. She builds her House of Faith on the doctrinal sleepers known as the Symbolical Books, which in turn rest upon the "foundation of the apostles and prophets," which, finally, rests upon the eternal Rock, Jesus Christ, of whom it is said that "other foundation can no man lay."

Lutheranism then, we should say, means three things: (1) It means adherence to the Confessions comprising the Book of Concord, not as so many cement walls for man's incarceration but as a witness to the faith of the fathers and a guide to their followers; (2) Faith in the Holy Scriptures, not as a fetish on the one hand nor a mere human document on the other, nor as an arsenal of theological polemics, nor as a textbook of history and natural science, but as the inspired Word of God whose purpose it is to make us wise unto salvation; and (3) Above all else, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, not as a mere reformer or teacher or "pattern for young men," but as the Redeemer of the world and the everlasting Rock upon which the Church is built.

If this be true, certain corollaries must of necessity follow. Our theology will not be a cold-blooded rationalism on the one hand nor a wild fanaticism on the other. It will not be so broad minded as to have neither center nor periphery, but neither will it be so narrow as to make breathing impossible. It will be firm, but with the firmness of life, not the rigidity of death. It will not deny the historic past, but neither will it despair of the present or be helpless apart from the terminology and intellectual apparatus of the sixteenth century.

Lutheranism, as we think of it, is not a hothouse plant that cannot thrive outside the cosmogony of the Middle Ages, but rather an offshoot of the Tree of Life, whose fruits ripen

every month and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. It values its doctrines as the builder values his plumb line, but it does not imagine that the plumb line is all that is necessary for the erection of a house. It treasures its great dogmas, but is not half so anxious to "ram them down the throat of the unwilling modern" as to bring him into vital contact with the living Christ. It will not indulge in easy-going unionism, assuming that "they are all about the same, only different colors of the same cloth," but at the same time it will not treat its neighbors as if they were the bubonic plague and itself the only heir to the Kingdom. Rather, it will thank God for all who seek the true Foundation, and rejoice over every House of Faith erected there, even if it be not exactly in the Lutheran style of architecture. We rejoice in the name of Luther, but let us rejoice still more in the name of Christ. "I beg of you," said Luther (as quoted by Hjalmar Holmquist, the noted church historian) "not to use my name. Call yourselves not Lutherans but Christians. What is Luther? The doctrine is not mine, neither am I crucified for anyone. . . . I neither am nor desire to be anybody's master. Christ alone is our Master."

WHAT IS LUTHERANISM?

XI

J. MAGNUS ROHNE

[WITH the publication in 1926 of *Norwegian American Lutheranism Up To 1872* (Macmillan), the name of Dr. Rohne has been made familiar to Lutherans beyond his own circle and to the academic world at large. This important work represents the fruitage of studies pursued under the direction of the faculty of the Harvard Divinity School where he won his Th.D. degree in 1925. His notable contributions from time to time to *Studies and Records* (a journal conducted by the Norwegian American Historical Association) and to *Teologisk Tidsskrift* have placed his name most favorably before students interested especially in historical research.

Dr. Rohne is a product of the great Norwegian Lutheran Church in America. Born at Cranfill's Gap, Texas, on July 18, 1891, he took his academic course in three of his synod's institutions: first at Clifton College (Texas), 1909-1911; thereupon for six years at Luther College (Decorah, Iowa), where he was made a bachelor of arts in 1917; and then continuing for three more years at Luther Theological Seminary (St. Paul). In 1921 he completed a graduate course leading to the degree of Master of Theology at Hartford Theological Seminary. He was ordained in 1920 and, with the exception of brief pastorates, has served his church in the educational phase of its work. Since 1923 his Alma Mater has claimed him for herself, where he continues to serve with honorable distinction.—*The Editor.*]

Any church, in order to live, must be able to meet the major challenges of every changing age. This is the glorious achievement of Christianity throughout all of its history, though this selfsame Christianity, like an ever-fermenting wine, has broken one old wineskin after another.

If the Lutheran Church, or any other Church, has gotten to the point where it cannot meet the challenges that the varying ages hurl into its teeth, the Lutheran Church is doomed.

This does not mean that Lutheranism is doomed, for Lutheranism, as a sound and workable set of eternal Christian principles, will survive though attacked by the very gates of hell. At the present time, as at all times since the days of the Reformation, not all Lutheranism is restricted to the confines of the Lutheran Church. As the mother Church of Protestantism, we view this result with mingled feelings. We rejoice that our principles are taken up and put to very effective use by others who do not use our name. An entirely analogous situation arose in the days of Christ. John had discovered one who was casting out demons in Christ's name, though he did not follow Christ's group. John very promptly forbade him to do this, having a higher regard for groups and parties than for the work. Christ reproved John, however, and rather rejoiced in the activity of this unknown independent worker, saying, "He that is not against us is for us" (Luke 9:50). Thank God that our Lutheran principles have the great currency that they have, and thank God for all of those who are following these principles more or less accurately, though they have long since lost the consciousness that these principles were ever Lutheran. On the other hand, the partial acceptance of our principles exhibit the same weaknesses as the partial acceptance of any other set of principles always have done. Remove this or that glorious gem of truth from its genial setting and it will not sparkle as it should; both the gem and its new surroundings will suffer. For instance, the radiant doctrine of justification by faith loses its luster in a system which is built on the thorough-going logic of absolute predestination. These two, in their own settings, may shed a pleasant light, but forcibly brought together these two rival gems cannot but clash and create a far from pleasant impression. The time may come when these incongruities will become manifest to those who have found it necessary to bolster up their otherwise complete systems by the addition of this doctrine. We rejoice that this doctrine has such an appeal that practically all of our

friendly rivals have been forced to accept certain portions of it; on the other hand, we deplore the fact that they have been forced to practically mutilitate this priceless doctrine to fit it into systems where it obviously does not belong. Would it not be better to look over the whole Lutheran system and ponder the possibility of accepting the distinctly Lutheran doctrines such as justification by faith in their proper setting or else reject these doctrines altogether? That is the challenge of the Lutheran Church. On the other hand we are here to consider the challenge of American life to the Lutheran Church.

I

In order to get even a superficial idea as to the qualifications of the Lutheran Church to meet the challenges of American life, we must place these two factors into juxtaposition. Assuming that American life is sufficiently well known to make the difficult task of defining it unnecessary, we shall pass on to a consideration of the qualifications of the Lutheran Church.

This is indeed necessary: "for which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an embassage, and desireth conditions of peace" (Luke 14:28 ff.). Even if there is no particularly hostile threat that is now confronting the Lutheran Church any more than at all other times, there is involved in the varying conditions confronting the Church a set of implications that may spell not only lack of success but ultimately the loss of prestige, yes, the loss of life itself.

Looking at the Lutheran Church in the United States, we find that it ranks in 1929 among the Protestants as a strag-

gling third placer after the Methodists and the Baptists, the Lutherans having a membership of 2,714,685, as against the some odd nine millions that each of the two leaders boast. But there are some potential forces hidden in this group that even the most sensitive statistical tables fail to register. The American Lutheran Church is a branch of a world-wide organization which boasts a membership of about eighty-one millions of souls, this membership equaling the combined membership of all the Reformed bodies taken together.[1] On American soil, by a rigid system of elimination, during which numbers were mercilessly sacrificed in order to achieve other ideals, this Church has attained a homogeneity in spirit, thought, and membership which cannot be duplicated anywhere in the Protestant Church.

There are indications that the Lutheran Church is marshaling its forces for important conquests. Much has been said about church union in this country, yet it has devolved upon the Lutheran Church to be the pioneer also in that line. In 1917 occurred the union of three Norwegian American Lutheran bodies into the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America. In 1918 the United Lutheran Church of America was formed out of a large number of bodies located principally in the eastern states of our land. At the present time, successful negotiations are carried on between the Buffalo, Ohio, and Iowa Lutheran synods, looking to a union of these Churches in the near future. All along the line one senses a very strong Pan-Lutheran feeling, which is a decidedly recent development. For seven years a committee from the various Lutheran bodies, except Missouri, have collaborated in the publication of a uniform text of Luther's Small Catechism. During the war the various Lutheran bodies, except Missouri, joined forces for the purpose of carrying on work for soldiers' and sailors' welfare. After the war, these same forces reorganized themselves into a Lutheran council for carrying on

[1] Dr. O. M. Norlie, *Lutheran World Almanac,* 1921, p. 149. See also Jörgenson, Fleisch, and Wentz, *The Lutheran Churches of the World,* 1929.

relief work among the Lutherans in Europe. As a result of this noble work, the Lutheran Churches in Europe suddenly awoke to the fact that there was a powerful Lutheran force at work in America. Immediately steps were taken to hold world conferences of Lutherans, the conference for 1929 being held at Copenhagen, Denmark. With even a casual connection established with the European Lutherans, anyone can see that the Lutheran home mission problems in America will be greatly simplified, as transfers can readily and effectively be made from the European Lutheran Church to the American Lutheran Church. None of these factors are registered in the census tables, though these are real factors to reckon with in appraising the size and potential power of the Lutheran Church in America.

II

1. Besides these decidedly propitious domestic adjustments, the Lutheran Church has had sufficient experience in America to qualify it to meet the various exigencies that might arise. The strange notion has gotten abroad that Americans physically and mentally are addicted to rum, speed, and science, while spiritually they, like the Athenians long ago, "spend their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing." Like Paul, the Lutheran Church is content to preach Christ and him crucified in such a way as to satisfy the theoretical and practical needs of any age. Ever since the days of the earliest Greek philosophers there have been those who have emphasized either stability or mobility, some saying that everything is moving, others, that everything is standing still. Neither is absolutely right to the exclusion of the other, for there is truth on both sides. The Lutheran Church has recognized the craving of man, both for stability and for change. It emphatically and authoritatively states that there are eternal, unchangeable principles, just as there are temporal and changeable devices.

If it is true that the desire for change and action is the

outstanding American characteristic, the Lutheran Church has shown a flexibility that should qualify it to meet the challenges of American life. Only a cursory glance at its history and organization in America will prove this.

Its history in America is as old as the country itself. It has taken an honorable part in every major event in American history, though always in such a way that it has never attempted to dominate the state and meddle with its affairs. It has furnished men to fill important positions in high and low executive offices. Its men have raised their voices in practically every national legislative assembly, and in many of the state assemblies. It has furnished men, yes complete regiments,[2] for the army, and it has furnished more than its quota to the navy. Its men have helped make and enforce the laws; its members have dutifully obeyed the laws.

Over against the other religious organizations it has always retained a friendly aloofness, to be sure, but it has never failed to respect the rights and prerogatives of the other bodies. It has never failed to give an account of the faith that is in us, but, we hope, it has always spoken the truth in love. The Lutheran Church has been an unfailing champion of that which is noble and good, and it has joined other bodies in crusades where moral issues have been at stake. It has jealously guarded its rights and prerogatives, particularly over against the state, but it has never resorted to any other means than moral suasion. The Lutheran Church has taken an active interest in every major event in American history, being always careful to inquire what its Christian duties were in the case.

Turning to the domestic affairs of the Lutheran Church, we find the same wide-awake, flexible spirit. Lutheranism in America has not stood still and marked time all these years. Besides carrying on very aggressive missionary and charitable activities, it has established many educational institutions,

[2] *E.g.,* to Fifteenth Wisconsin Regiment whose gallant deeds have been recorded by Dr. Waldemar Ager.

some of which have attained to national prominence. Even in the matter of doctrine there has been a certain flexibility, the original authors of the confessional writings of the Church having had the great good sense to distinguish acutely between what is essential and non-essential, eternal and non-eternal. Even within the field of the essential there has been flexibility in so far as interest has shifted from one to another phase of the faith once delivered to the saints.

In its earliest stages in America Lutheranism was marked by little interest in dogma but a great interest in life. At that time, the name pietism was attached to this somewhat one-sided interest; to-day, in its more offensive forms, this is called modernism, though the Lutheran Church, as such, has had a remarkable genius for heading off these movements before they do a great deal of damage. This heading-off process was accomplished by the very obvious device of emphasizing doctrine. The dogmatic period which followed sailed along smoothly enough, clearing up all the obstacles in its way until it inevitably encountered the stubborn question of predestination. While certain portions of the Church were busily engaged with this difficult question and much bitterness and strife were engendered, other portions of the Church started what they called the exegetical tendency, or the tendency of biblical interpretation which is so popular to-day, particularly at our Bible schools. But this tendency, when not supplemented and directed by the dogmatic tendency, is inclined to become quite vague and indefinite in its findings. It ran into the dead calm of "open questions," whence it was rescued by the so-called historical tendency. The historical tendency is above all practical and operates with statistics and facts to awaken interest in the external organization and exploits of the Church. It demands a "program," and a "program" costs money; consequently it usually demands large sums of money and receives it for a while. Just at the present time we are emerging from a historical and missionary tendency, and there is enough uncertainty in what is going

to happen next to keep us spellbound. The Lutheran Church, therefore, lacks neither flexibility nor variety of interest in even the so-called stable and eternal things. There is no indication that this wineskin is growing too old to hold the sparkling and ever-fermenting forces of life. Incidentally, this shift of interest has followed, in practically reverse order, the four major disciplines of theology, namely, dogmatic, exegetical, historical, and practical.

In respect to its organization, also, the Lutheran Church is manifestly qualified to meet the challenges of American life in its reasonable demand for change and variety. The Lutheran Church has escaped many of the difficulties that practically every one of the Churches that arose on English soil had in regard to organization, because the Lutheran Church wisely relegated this question to the realm of convenience. As a result there is in the Lutheran Church the utmost variety and flexibility in church government. In America this freedom of organization has run the gamut from high church Episcopalianism to a near Quakerism. "Every man to his own taste" is the Lutheran policy in regard to church government.

On the score of flexibility the Lutheran Church should have no difficulty in meeting any challenge that might arise. How will she qualify on the score of stability?

2. The Lutheran Church was born in an age of intellectual and spiritual ferment. It satisfied and stilled the querulousness of that age, and there is no reason why it should not be able to furnish much needed rest and repose at the present time. The key to the whole situation then, as now, was to strike a happy medium between the use and abuse of authority. Though the Lutheran Church has been acclaimed as the mother of liberty, civil as well as ecclesiastical, she nevertheless has always recognized and upheld the principles of authority. And men crave this, not least in America to-day. When constituted authority fails, other authority is going to arise, and this will work great hardships to all con-

cerned. Perhaps it is true to-day as it was in the days of Isaiah that "in returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" (Is. 30:15).

The Lutheran Church invites searching souls to return to the Bible as the only source and rule for faith, doctrine, and life. Our cry is the cry of Isaiah: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Is. 8:20). In this Word of God we have "the faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

Is there stability here? There certainly is. The Son of God who thrice hurled back the onslaughts of Satan by this written word at the time of his major temptations declares with an oath: "Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:18). Christ has this further challenge of experience which any man can try out for himself: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17). This Word is bound to be authoritative, "for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Pet. 1:19-21). This is further established by the statement: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (II Tim. 3:16).

Here is the highest authority conceivable. Here we have a set of verbally inspired writings, miraculously brought into being as the "Holy Spirit moved, illumined, and guided the chosen human agents to proclaim by word of mouth and reduce to writing the revealed will and counsel of God." [3] The Lutheran position on this point has been stated by Dr. Martin Luther in this way: "One letter, yes, one single 'tittle' of Scripture is of more significance than heaven and

[3] Definition furnished by Dr. G. M. Bruce to his classes at Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., 1917-20.

earth. Therefore we cannot tolerate that any one would violate it even in the least." [4] On this Word of God he stood at Worms, on this Word he stood all his life and no power on earth or in hell could budge him. Through it all he triumphantly sang:

> Still must they leave God's Word its might,
> For which no thanks they merit.[5]

There Luther stood and there the whole Lutheran Church stands to this day. There is not a single Lutheran body in the world which would dare to offer anything but a full-toned subscription to the Bible as "God's revealed Word and therefore the only source and rule for faith, doctrine, and life." This unequivocal subscription to God's Word harks back to the "Comprehensive Summary" in the Book of Concord: [6] "First we receive and embrace the Prophetic and Apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as pure, clear fountains of Israel, which are the only true standard whereby to judge all teachers and doctrines." Or, as Dr. Krauth puts it: "The supreme and absolute authority of God's Word in determining all questions of doctrine and of duty, is a fundamental principle of the Reformation—a principle so fundamental, that without it, there would have been no Reformation—and so vital, that a Reformation without it, could such a Reformation be supposed, would have been at least a glittering delusion and failure." [7]

Built on this rock of God's Word are the confessions of the Lutheran Church. With all Christendom we accept the three Ecumenical or General Creeds, namely, the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian. The Lutheran synods which have sprung from German antecedents usually accept the

[4] Quoted from Dr. J. A. O. Stub, *Verbal Inspiration* (Lutheran Publishing House, Decorah, Iowa), p. 59.

[5] "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," verse 4, Hymn No. 270 in Lutheran Hymnary (Lutheran Publishing House, Decorah, Iowa, 1913).

[6] H. E. Jacobs, Book of Concord (People's Edition, General Council Publication Board, Philadelphia, Pa., 1911), p. 535.

[7] Charles P. Krauth, D.D., *The Conservative Reformation and its Theology* (General Council Publication Board, Philadelphia, 1913), p. 14.

whole Book of Concord, whereas the Norwegians and Danes accept only the Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism.[8] In this latter case, though they issue no official pronouncement concerning the other books of the Book of Concord, the Danes and Norwegians undoubtedly agree with the statement of the former General Synod that they regard the "secondary symbols as expositions of Lutheran doctrine of great historical and interpretative value." [9]

The Lutheran Church thus offers a definite and clear-cut statement as to its understanding of the doctrines of Scripture. It accepts these writings confessionally, not because they were composed by her theologians, "but because (*quia*) they have been derived from God's Word." [10] To make this doubly emphatic, the Lutherans say they accept their confessional writings *quia* (because) they have been derived from God's Word, and not *quatenus* (as to how far) they have been thus derived. Here is a system, then, which offers stability, order, and authority—just the things the serious-minded religionists demand.

Manifestly, then, the Lutheran Church should be able to meet all the varying challenges of American life. On the one hand there is elasticity and suppleness to meet the very rapid changes that sometimes take place. In her policies, in her church government, yes, even in her rigid and set doctrines there is a healthy set of accommodations that will insure an open-minded and fresh treatment of any new exigency that might arise. On the other hand she offers stability, order, and authority to fit any of the more serious moods of life. Like Luther himself, the Lutheran Church can adjust itself to the grave humor of life without losing dignity; yet, she so constantly remembers her eternal purposes that there is no one who can better minister to men in the extreme crises of life than the Lutheran Church. The Lutheran Church

[8] For this difference see Dr. J. L. Neve, *Introduction to Lutheran Symbolics* (F. J. Heer Publishing Company, Columbus, O., 1917), p. 22.

[9] Neve, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

[10] "*Sed quia e verbo Domini est desumpta,*" Book of Concord, p. 536.

is qualified to enter into any mood; rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

Finally, a little comparison with others on this score may not be amiss. Dr. Charles P. Krauth says: [11]

> As the Romish Church represents mere rest and stability, the Reformed mere unrest and mobility, and both are consequently defective in development and in history in the highest sense of those terms, the Lutheran Church, on the other hand, has in it the true germ of historical life, which constantly expands itself toward a higher perfection. In the Romish Church the life of history dries up, in the Reformed it is comminuted; in the one it compacts itself to a mummy, in the other it dissipates itself into atoms.

III

Another qualification that the Lutheran Church has of meeting the challenge of American life is that the Lutheran Church has an intelligent way of dealing with human reason. At Marburg, Zwingli enthroned reason and made it the sole judge in spiritual matters. The Word of God was to be accepted only in so far as it pleased human reason. If reason rebelled, the Word of God should, for the sake of peace, graciously yield to reason. Calvin's *Institutes* were largely an appeal to cold reason. Luther, on the other hand, based his doctrine squarely on God's Word as it had appealed to his spiritually enlightened conscience. Zwingli sowed a wind of doubt at Marburg that has grown into a veritable cyclone of skepticism and detraction. It was Zwingli's high privilege to say: "Yea hath the Lord said?" about the Word of God concerning the Lord's Supper; it has been the high privilege of an unbroken line of doubters to say the same thing about practically every other word of Scripture ever since. Luther, seeing the great danger lurking in this unwarranted accom-

[11] *Conservative Reformation and Its Theology*, p. 126.

modation to human reason, closed the door then and there; now the others are trying to close the door, but the feet that were planted in the door jamb at Marburg, in 1529, have grown to tremendous size by 1929. There is danger that not only the door but the whole house will be torn to pieces; and through the cracks of the doors angry men are snarling ugly epithets like "modernists," "fundamentalists," "destructive critics," and the like. Used in their present vehemence, these words take on the coloring of profanity. For us, it is enough to be known as "Lutheran." That covers it. We are neither modernists nor fundamentalists, neither higher nor lower critics. We are simply "Lutherans," and as such invite the attention of the reader to this unique factor in American life.

The Lutheran Church has an intelligent way of dealing with human reason, thereby saving itself a great deal of trouble. Before the Fall, human reason was in full conformity with God's will. Then came the Fall, and man's reason as well as his other faculties were perverted. Thenceforth, natural man lacks spiritual understanding; he "receiveth not the things of the spirit of God" (Cor. 2:14). Worse than that, "the carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7). The unregenerate are ruled out as being unable to do anything of a spiritual nature, for they are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). To leave them no foot to stand on, the Bible caustically remarks that though "the light shineth in darkness . . . the darkness comprehended it not" (John 1:5). The dreadful impotency of unregenerate man is summarized in this tragic passage: "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling, have given themselves over into lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Eph. 4:18-19). Surely unregenerate human reason is to be ruled out of court as being altogether incompetent to act in any capacity whatever in the spiritual realm. Unregen-

erate reason is not only stark blind spiritually, but it lacks even the eyes that see spiritually.

There can thus be no such thing as a profane theological science. When profane theological science demands that theology be lowered—or lifted, as they think—to the plane of natural man, it is obvious that the very heart will be cut out of theology. Some have noticed that theology under this treatment has languished and all but stiffened in death. In their panic helplessness they have tried every possible device. Some have tried to appeal to theoretical reason, or to the cold thought processes of logic. The heart is still hungry, the patient is still anemic. Others have tried to appeal to practical reason, or to the emotions and conscience. The Norwegian theologian Dr. O. Hallesby calls this the old and the new rationalism and draws the following distinction between them:

> The difference, then, between the old and new rationalism is this: The old rationalism lays the emphasis upon theoretical reasoning, that is, upon our thinking, while the new rationalism places the emphasis upon our practical reason, that is, upon the feelings. That which is common to both, however, that which precipitates both tendencies into rationalism, is the circumstance that human reason is made the criterion for that which may be believed within the bounds of God's revelation.[12]

What can either the theoretical or the practical reason do with such concepts as biblical inspiration, the resurrection of Christ, the resurrection of the body, the Trinity, the incarnation, death, judgment, and other miraculous and mysterious phenomena? The Lutheran Church definitely asserts that these are outside the province of profane theological science. They are not un-scientific, they are super-scientific.

Theology, to be worthy of that name must be a theology

[12] O. Hallesby, *The Main Difference Between Positive and Liberal Theology* (Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, Minn., Tr. by Dr. G. T. Rygh, 1925), p. 9.

of the regenerated (*theologia regenitorum*). Only the new man senses the will of God; only the twice-born man has an insight into the things that are spiritually discerned. But even here we must be warned that the new man is greatly hindered by the spiritually dead old man who clings to him and persistently interposes his own vagaries to confuse the elect. The Bible casts such a long shadow of reproach upon the human reason that even the regenerate reason falls under its pall. "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part: but then I shall know even as I am known" (I Cor. 13:12). Thank God for the hope of a clarified vision hereafter in eternity.

Let no one think, however, that we can dispose of unregenerate reason by merely waving it into a corner. Perhaps it is just as well, seeing unregenerate reason at times affords an approach to the unregenerate heart. The Church can never afford to forget that an Augustine was won to vital Christianity through the young man's interest in the dry technique of the sermon delivery of St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan. If a regenerate man should love the Lord with all his heart, soul, and mind (Matt. 22:37), surely these phases of unregenerate man must not be neglected by the Church which is frankly bent on making disciples of as many of the unregenerate as possible.

What concession shall we make to unregenerate reason, then? None at all. On the other hand, we must have the patience to lead unregenerate reason step by step, through the vistas of truths fathomable to it into those truths that are not fathomable to it until it is regenerate. In so doing we may be permitted to hope that the Holy Spirit will awaken in the unregenerate a desire to have Christ dwell in his heart by faith; that he, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth all knowledge, that he might be filled with all the fullness of God. (Eph. 3:17-19.)

How shall the unregenerate be led? The Norwegian theologian, Dr. O. Hallesby,[18] distinguishes three planes of reality, the world of *nature,* the world of *mind,* and the *supernatural* world. Natural man can find his way unaided in the first two realms, but he lacks every qualification for finding his way in the third realm. Even in the third realm there might be enough to entice him. The supernatural realm, which is somewhat analogous to the Kingdom of God, has its temporal as well as eternal aspects. Conceivably natural man could be led like Nicodemus to seek the Master at night in order to inquire further into the meaning of regeneration, which, in its temporal aspect, meant to him to enter his mother's womb a second time, but which, in its eternal spiritual aspects, meant vastly more as Christ very promptly showed him. While Christ was appalled at the man's spiritual ignorance, he nevertheless, made a friend of Nicodemus and ushered him into the bright day of the regenerate mind.

Why worry about human reason? Because human reason, by the grace of God, can become an avenue to the human heart. In a dignified manner the Lutheran Church shows the carnal mind his place. Instead of antagonizing him, it will arouse his respect particularly when he sees that the Church sincerely wishes him well for time and eternity. In the face of the restlessness of human reason, the Lutheran Church, like a wise spiritual mother, knows better than the child of this world himself knows what is wrong. When other spiritual families are in uproar and confusion, the Lutheran Church is mistress of her own house, having established a *qui vive* with human reason four hundred years ago. Once it has been established that the Word of God is to rule the house, human reason, as a child and handmaid, finds no difficulty in adjusting herself. This makes for order and restfulness to all concerned.

The Lutheran Church, therefore, is particularly qualified

[18] *Op. cit.,* p. 23.

to meet the challenge of American life because it has an intelligent way of dealing with human reason.

> No church has so vigorously protested against the abuses of human reason, and none has done so much for the highest culture of the human mind. . . . No church has been so deeply rooted in the verities of the ancient faith, and none has been marked by so much theological progression: in none has independent religious thought gone forth in such matchless ornature of learning, and under such constant control of a genuine moderation. No church has enunciated more boldly the principles of Christian liberty, and none has been so free from a tendency to pervert it to licentiousness. No church has more reverently bowed to the authority of God's Word, and none has been more free from the tendency to sect and schism.[14]

IV

If asked for further proofs that the Lutheran Church is able to meet the challenges of American life, we would unhesitatingly answer that the Lutheran Church has a satisfying way of dealing with conscience. The Lutheran Church was born when an obscure monk found peace of conscience, and its very ability to satisfy the tender consciences of that and every age since has accounted largely for its unprecedented spread.

Why the challenge of conscience? Because it is the decisive factor in the religious history of every age. Christ attacked the Pharisees because they lacked conscience. Paul points his whole appeal in the Epistle to the Romans directly to conscience. The Christian Church was born on Pentecost day when Peter preached in such a way that by the grace of God "they were pricked in their heart" (Acts 2:37). The Christian Church was reborn when Martin Luther came out

[14] Krauth, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

of his cloistered cell and told of some of the things he had experienced outside the very gates of hell through a spiritual torment which has only been matched in Gethsemane. Some superficial historians point to the external conditions of Luther's time and say that these brought on the Reformation. The conditions were bad enough, to be sure, but they had been worse, and they are worse to-day. Some say there had been famine in the land, the scourge of disease, economic distress, profiteering, graft, dishonesty in high and low places, incompetence in government, laxity in law enforcement, unjust and unequal laws, overbearing and cruel officials—in short, times were out of joint. And this, they say, made the Reformation! This, they say, was the womb in which the Church was born again! Yet, one cannot fail to make the observation that it matters not how many thousand plagues you put into the caldron of cold equity, you cannot multiply evil to bring forth the good. On the contrary, the increase in evil only decreases the possibility of good.

In a far different way was the Church of God reborn. In a dark cell, a monk began to ponder the fact and heinousness of sin. Very soon this brought him to the fact of a personal God to whom he was accountable. Louder and louder grew the voice of conscience, the more he attempted to satisfy God's law by working righteousness. Like a ravenous vulture this monster of torment gnawed and clawed at his vitals day and night, and, like Baal's priests of old, Luther resorted to self-torture, hoping that the pains of fasting and flagellation could be made sharp enough to make him forget for a moment the gnawing pains of an accusing conscience. But there was no solace; there was no surcease. He at last sank to the floor in his dank and foul dungeon and was carried out as dead.

By one of those accidents which God has often staged at crucial moments in history, some one whispered into the languid ear of that sin-sick monk the essence of the Gospel

of Salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Luther did not recognize its solacing power at that time, for he thought he was too far gone to care one way or the other. He had fought to the bitter end, hearing the thunders of the Law, being exposed to the storms of accusation that threatened to break in pieces his heart; having felt the earthquake of divine wrath shaking the very foundations on which he had been standing; and finally all his work had been burned as wood, hay, and stubble and he himself had suffered every loss and was barely saved yet so as by fire. After he had gone through all this, it is no wonder that he did not recognize the still small voice as the Lord's. The Lord's it was, nevertheless, and Luther lived, a twice-born man whose conscience was at peace with God.

A conscience so aroused would never fall into the easy accommodations demanded by that and this time. The vestal fire that was kindled by divine accident on the altar of that young monk's heart was to blaze forth into a holy conflagration enveloping most of Europe. Such was the result of the arousing of one man's conscience. Soon the powers of Church and State took notice of this strange thing which neither Herod nor the chief priests did understand. At all times they questioned him on the basis of the decrees of popes and Church councils, but Luther invariably answered on the basis of a conscience rooted in the Word of God. From that position they could not budge him. At a last dramatic moment at which the stage had been set for a far different climax, the stubborn monk declared:

> Since Your Majesty and Your Lordships ask for a plain answer, I will give you one without either horns or teeth. Unless convinced by Scripture or plain reasons—for I believe neither the Pope nor the councils alone, since it is certain they have often erred and contradicted one another—I am overcome by the Scriptures quoted and my conscience is bound in God's Word, I

> cannot and will not revoke anything, for it is unsafe and dishonest to act against conscience. Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise; God help me! Amen.[15]

Luther risked his life to save his conscience, and thereby gave solace to wounded consciences over all the world. This one man's conscience was pitted against all the principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Luther prevailed against these incalculable odds, not because he was stronger than other men, but because his conscience was firmly anchored and grounded in God's Word. Having put on the whole armor of God, he stood his ground and again brought peace to a harried and distressed world. Though none of Luther's blood was shed at this time or later, he had given of his life blood to arrive at a state of peace with God. Others before him had shed their blood for that same peace, so Luther stood on blood-bought ground.

And there we stand. But there seems to be great danger that the Christian Church shall lose the blood-bought ground of a free conscience through peace with God. Through one device or another the emphasis is being shifted away from man's troubled conscience to other things that are trivial in comparison. Certainly conscience is ignored shamefully in the formal learning of the day. Dr. O. M. Norlie in his *Elementary Christian Psychology* says:

> The average psychology pays little, if any, attention to conscience. An examination of 20 secular psychologies, selected from a shelf almost at random, revealed the fact that out of 10,070 pages not one page was devoted to the conscience. One of the twenty, *Educational Psychology* (Vol. I. *The Original Nature of Man,* p. 202), by E. L. Thorndike, pauses just long enough to say that man does not have religious instinct,

[15] Quoted from William Dallmann, *Martin Luther, His Life and Labor, for the Plain People* (Concordia Publ. House, St. Louis, Mo., 1917), p. 144.

> nor does he have innate conscience. An examination of 20 psychologies of religion revealed the fact that these books, covering 6,697 pages, had a total of only 34 pages devoted to the conscience, 31 of which appeared in a single work. (Stalker's *Christian Psychology.*) The word conscience is practically struck out from the vocabulary of psychology. It is seldom mentioned in the class room where psychology is taught, and then often in ridicule.[16]

Why secular psychology neglects conscience need not puzzle anyone who knows the limitations of the carnal mind. But why so-called Christian psychology can afford to do so is a puzzle, unless indeed this psychology has also sunk to the level of natural man. Neither secular nor Christian psychology can do this with impunity. There have been abuses of the appeals to conscience in the past, just as there are abuses of all of God's choicest gifts. But when even the church begins to systematically ignore conscience, conscience is a force of sufficient activity and vitality to break the old wineskins. Many of the Reformed denominations have forcibly stilled the voice of conscience because it has an unpleasant way of "speaking out of turn." When they have about succeeded in this, they have the movement of "Modernism" on their hands which is a perverse and unbalanced appeal to an "inborn criterion of truth," an "a priori Standard of Judgment," a "native sense of right and wrong" or whatever else they choose to call it. It is the old story of the man who was going to wean his horse from eating. About the time he had nearly succeeded, the horse died. Humankind simply cannot be weaned from conscience. Even "the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness,

[16] (Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, Minn., 1924), p. 143.

and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another" (Rom. 2:14-15).

During all this time the Lutheran Church has faithfully stuck to its post. In season and out of season it has preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ through which alone consciences are healed. There is no other power in heaven and on earth, at least that is known among men, which can still the accusing voice of conscience except "Justification by Faith." Luther, in a somewhat different way than the Preacher of old, had tried everything else and he found that it all was vanity: philosophy, poetry, music, nature, cultured society failed him; so did monastic rules, Ave Marias, the *hours,* the practice of virtue, self-effacement, self-negation, and self-torture. In many ways Luther was a modern man, and certainly his fundamental spiritual, mental, and physical needs were the same as those of the modern man. Yet, try as he might, he found no peace until he appropriated unto himself the wonderful doctrine of justification by faith.

This doctrine of justification by faith the Lutheran Church offers in its proper and congenial setting to meet the most fundamental of all human—and therefore also American—needs, namely the need of a quiet and serene conscience. What America above all else needs is:

> A closer walk with God,
> A calm and heavenly frame.
> A light to shine upon the road
> That leads me to the Lamb.

This is the balm of Gilead. In vain have they used many medicines, for they have not been cured. In this there is healing, in this there is health.

The Lutheran Church, therefore, is able to meet the most difficult of all challenges, the challenge of a satisfying way of dealing with conscience. No other Church has had so much experience in the cure of souls; no other Church was founded specifically to meet this most fundamental of all human needs. Therefore the Lutheran Church is most

qualified to meet this need. With this need met, everything else will take care of itself—there we rest our case.

V

Another qualification that the Lutheran Church has of meeting the challenges of American life is that it has a well-defined body of doctrine.

We have repeatedly spoken of a congenial setting for the doctrine of justification by faith. The Lutheran Church arose out of a great need of the human heart, consequently its fundamental doctrine is justification by faith. The Reformed Churches arose in the serenity of the study, consequently their fundamental doctrine is God's sovereign will as expressed particularly in the doctrine of absolute predestination. The Reformed began with God's will to man; the Lutheran began with man's need of God. Or as Bauer has it: "The Reformed system begins above, and comes down; the Lutheran begins below, and ascends." [17] Dr. Charles P. Krauth puts it this way: "The Reformed begin with God, and reasons down to manward; the Lutheran begins with man, and reasons up to Godward." [18]

Even these cursory contrasts, which are faulty because they are incomplete, indicate that the doctrine of justification by faith is singularly out of place in any other system than the Lutheran. You cannot begin at both ends at once in a proposition of this kind, else the distracted souls will be driven back and forth between these extreme poles of truth until they are completely bewildered.

On the other hand, the doctrine of justification by faith throws its genial rays in every direction until its glory fills the whole room. Let a person begin to ponder the problem of justification, and he will very soon arrive at the proposition that there must be a personal God to whom he is accountable. Once the idea of accountability arises, the fact of sin emerges. Sin, traced to its final implications, will prove

[17] Quoted from Krauth, *op. cit.*, p. 123 [18] *Ibid.*

itself to be original as well as actual, both of which are damnable. Sin craves a Savior, and such we have in Christ Jesus, who is true man as well as true God. The merits of Christ must be somehow brought to bear upon the sinner, and this takes place through the medium of faith. Faith, again, is brought about by the Holy Spirit working through the means of grace, namely the Word and the Sacraments. This activity of the Holy Ghost is performed in the Church, which, in its visible aspects comprises both the good and the wicked, but in its invisible aspects, comprises only the good. The Church should be one, and there are passages condemning both schism (or sinful disunion) in the Church and unionism (or sinful union) in the Church. The Sacraments are three in number, though Absolution has been combined with the Lord's Supper in such a way that we now usually enumerate only two sacraments, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Repentance and Absolution are man's expression of his sorrow for sins and God's assurance of forgiveness. Throughout this whole summary, which includes the first thirteen articles of the Augsburg Confession, we have the bright rays of justification by faith playing upon all the phases of man's fundamental need of salvation. Good works, as a necessary postulate, follow justification by faith. Throughout there is a well-balanced parallel between God's grace and man's need.

Turning to the practical aspects of the Lutheran doctrine, we see immediately that the dispensation of the precious gift of justification by faith, as the *Kern und Stern* of God's Word, is entrusted to qualified persons who are to act as ministers of the Means of Grace. This same sense of order finds expression in the Lutheran doctrine of the relation of Church and State, which I hope some of the other contributors to this symposium will discuss more in detail. Christ's return to judgment sets death as the limit of the time of grace—after death man is not justified but judged.

The Lutheran doctrine of predestination is entirely in

harmony with its doctrine of justification. In both cases the Lutheran Church concedes to natural man the ability to perform acts of civil righteousness (labor in the field, have a friend, and the like); natural man can also conceivably attain to philosophical righteousness (enunciate and practice beautiful ideals as many of the heathen philosophers did); but we deny to natural man the free will to choose that which is good in God's sight, *i.e.,* attain to spiritual righteousness by his own powers. By a splendid system of relationships, the doctrine of justification is put over against the doctrine of predestination in such a way that they supplement and enrich each other.

God is not the cause of sin—man admitted that in connection with the doctrine of justification. Naturally one so justified performs good works and has, of course, no use for the worship of saints. The Lutherans give the wine as well as the bread to the communicants, considering nothing as being too good for the priesthood of believers. They encourage the marriage of their pastors because they regard marriage as a holy estate. They have purified the mass, they make no distinctions in meats, they have solved the question of monastic vows, and in every way they have curbed the unwarranted exercise of ecclesiastical power.

All of this the doctrine of justification by faith brought about. It freed the conscience, restored the sacraments, purified the Church, established a proper relationship bebetween Church and State, propounded a preachable doctrine of predestination, and rid the Church of abuses. This is the glorious achievement of the Lutheran Church, and we rejoice that practically all of Christendom is sharing with us in some form the fruits of these endeavors.

As far as we can see the Lutheran Church is admirably qualified to meet the challenges of American life also in respect to her system of doctrine. In Luther's Small Catechism, whose four hundredth anniversary we are now celebrating, the Lutheran Church has a literary, pedagogical,

and theological gem which has never been matched since the three chief creeds of Christendom were formulated.

VI

By its experience in America, by its power of adjustment both in the direction of elasticity and stability, by its intelligent policy over against human reason, by its satisfying way of dealing with conscience, and, finally, by its well-defined body of doctrines, the Lutheran Church is in every way qualified to meet the challenges of American life. The Lutheran Church has preferred to choose obedience rather than popularity, sound religious principles rather than the amassing of numbers; it has chosen to serve rather than be served. On this basis its success must be judged, and on this basis it boldly faces all the challenges of American life. Should the Lutheran Church launch out upon the deep in order to boost its membership, its boats would be filled to overflowing without in any way interfering with those who have already taken their places out yonder where the winds rush by and the waves roll high. Who knows, perhaps the Master will come by and order also us out—in that case we are entirely prepared to go. Perhaps to us shall come the command: "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited" (Is. 54:2-3).

WHAT IS LUTHERANISM?

XII

VERGILIUS FERM

As has already been indicated in the Foreword to this book, we have, for ill or for good, entered upon an age which is searchingly critical of former hallowed judgments. The heritages bequeathed us by our fathers before us are rudely questioned; we have a mind to do our own thinking, to have our own reasons for the faith that is within us. If we accept the doctrines, the genius and the peculiarities of the particular church into which we have been born and reared, it will not be that of naïve acquiescence. We must find valid reasons for our loyalties; the authority of tradition alone is for us frankly no longer sufficient.

Indicative of this contemporary spirit of critical inquiry is the flood of books and current discussions on religious themes. Our thoughts are directed upon questions which a former day may have pronounced as naïve. We are wondering what religion is; what Christianity is; what the fundamentals are; what Protestantism is; what did Jesus really teach; what did Paul really say; what did the fathers really try to do in the formulation of the great creeds in Christendom; and so on, *ad infinitum.* That we should be asking about our own denomination, what really is its essential character, its genius, its purpose, is not only inevitable but frankly necessary. If we are to be Presbyterians or Methodists or Lutherans, we must have our own reasons; and these reasons must not be rationalizations or labored apologies. These must be seriously reflective and critically defensible.

What follows, it should be clear both by the purpose of this Symposium and by the nature of its general theme, is not

set forth explicitly as a *confessio fidei* on the part of this author, but as an interpretation which he believes is defensible in the light of the critical character of the modern perspective.

* * * * * *

We may take our cue in answering the inquiry "What is Lutheranism?" from those who have been, for quite some time, searching out the essence of Christianity. That there has been a great deal of confusion and debate on this problem is hardly to be wondered at when one appreciates the rich content of Christianity, its plasticity in historic expressions, and the inevitable psychological tendency on the part of its devotees to select and magnify that phase which to them has carried the most vital personal appeal and satisfied a need. For convenience and brevity's sake we may divide the answers to this problem arbitrarily into three groups.

There are those who would make out the essence of Christianity to be the whole historic content, root, trunk and branches. For want of a better term this might well be called the *traditionally inclusive* tendency. Loisy, the great Catholic modernist, for example, insists that the development of Christianity in the Roman Catholic Church is but the inevitable fruition of the seed contained in the Gospel and accordingly is bound up part and parcel with the seed. The essence is *the whole tradition.* This view, typically Roman Catholic, is carried over and fittingly applied by many orthodox Protestant groups to-day and is perhaps best exemplified by the school which call themselves "fundamentalists." [1] To be a Christian one must believe all that has been believed and practiced, and keep step with the step of tradition.

[1] It is, of course, self-evident that a certain process of selection is carried on by those who would defend a "whole-as-essence." We are not here concerned in pointing out contradictions in this view. Rather, we would indicate the striking similarity of these various groups in their insistence upon a view of essence, that is, on the whole, *traditionally inclusive.*

A second group may be characterized as giving evidence of an *arbitrarily exclusive* tendency, *i.e.,* the selection of some phase in historic Christianity and making it represent the whole. This is the more common way. The opposite pole from Loisy is the great church historian Harnack who deplores not only the complex and shadowy development of subsequent Christian theology and philosophy but also even the earliest gospel *about* Jesus. The essence is for him the pristine gospel *of* Jesus. To know what it means to be a Christian is to shake off the shackles of all traditional development and get back to the pure unadulterated gospel which Jesus Himself taught and lived. We must even surmount Paul. Ritschlianism, of course, is the classic expression of this method. We need, however, only to remind ourselves that the selection of the essence, according to this general approach, differs most widely as to what is selected, varying all the way from one or few beliefs (*e.g.,* John Locke's insistence upon belief in Jesus as the Messiah) as the *sine qua non* character of Christianity to a creedless ethics.

Both of these approaches are easily criticized. The one faces the unavoidable difficulty of defending transitory notions, pre-scientific and unscientific views, errors, social expressions no longer vital to later centuries—all as necessarily bound up with Christianity. It lacks all sense of historical perspective, appreciation of the value of values, and like the ship which has accumulated barnacles upon its keel and hull, moves forward with difficulty because of encumbrances. The other approach is guilty of hyper-subjectivity and prejudice, to say nothing about the logic of trying to squeeze a whole into a part. Christianity is more than a mere belief, a mere feeling, or a mere morality.

In his prize essay on *The Reasonableness of Christianity,*[2] Professor Macintosh of Yale has offered a highly fruitful suggestion on this problem of essence. He insists that the

[2] Scribners, 1925. Recently translated into German under the title of *Vernunftgemässes Christentum,* Gotha: Klotz, 1928.

(good) essence of a thing is that which it is necessary to retain, after sloughing off adiaphora, to realize its valid purpose. The essence of Christianity is that, in historic Christianity, which must be retained in order to realize its valid ideals. This must be both vital and reasonable, individually and socially considered, and critically defensible. Whatever in historic Christianity is opposed to this is un- or anti-Christian and whatever does not vitally contribute to it is adiaphorous. We may call this approach the *critically evaluative* approach to the problem.[3]

The merits of this last approach are evident. It escapes the charge of dogmatism and subjectivity. It is grounded in history. It must be critically valid and individually and socially verifiable. It recognizes how easily in the course of events accretions arise which, under this test, may have to be eliminated. It escapes the defects implicit in the conceptions of Loisy and Harnack and yet retains what is valuable in both. It is highly workable in answer to the vexatious and contentious problem of what religion is, what Christianity is, and, we believe, highly suggestive in the problem before us, "What, after all, is Lutheranism?"

* * * * * *

We have thus far only given a possible clue. Let us follow it out in evaluating the peculiar genius of Lutheranism as a great Protestant movement and as a denomination which has come up out of the past claiming for itself a status *sui generis.* If we may discover a defensible essence in this movement we may go on and suggest later what is its *raison d'être* in the twentieth century and its possible contribution to the future of evangelical Christianity.

That there should be a difference of opinion of what constitutes Lutheranism, even among Lutherans themselves, is

[3] Professor Macintosh calls his concept of essence "broadly practical and humanistic," *op. cit.,* p. 14. It will pay the reader to follow the argument as it is given at length in this important work on the philosophy of Christianity.

not surprising. Not all Christians are agreed on what constitutes a Christian. Not all Democrats are agreed on what is the Democratic party (and, we may as well say, Republicans). Not all Christian Scientists are agreed on what is Christian Science. Not all fundamentalists are agreed on what are the fundamentals (and, we may as well say, modernists). And so on. Such problems can only be answered by a willingness to enter into a sympathetic and frank discussion. The appeal to a particular tradition and to random quotations from "the Fathers" is certainly not convincing, taken by themselves. Mere dogmatic pronouncements forever cut off the possibility of understanding. We must call out defensible interpretations and look back and over with a broad perspective. Our minds must be open windows where, if possible, new vistas and visions may be grasped. In an age, as critical and as exacting as ours, where we meet on every hand the repeated Hows and Whys and Whatfors, we need to have convictions that are valid, or we perish, whatever school we represent. We may best attain an appreciative understanding of our problem, it would seem, by searching out at the very start what may be regarded as the very essence of Lutheranism. If we could agree here, we have come a long way.

There are those among us who clearly reveal the decided inclination of interpreting Lutheranism after the fashion of the *traditionally inclusive* tendency. These folk tend to regard *a whole Lutheran tradition* as part and parcel, implicit and explicit elements of Lutheranism. The position borders dangerously on the implication of "take all or leave all." Included in this tradition would be the written documents of Luther, the confessional books of the church,[4] and the

[4] The Ecumenical Creeds; The Unaltered Augsburg Confession; The Apology of the Augsburg Confession; The Smalcald Articles; The Small Catechism of Luther; The Large Catechism of Luther; The Formula of Concord. The so-called "Visitation-Articles" were included among the Lutheran Symbols by C. F. W. Walther, the influential leader of the Missouri Synod in America. See my *The Crisis In American Lutheran Theology,* New York, 1927, pp. 125-126.

amplification of these confessional writings by such theologians who have been content with an embellishment upon what had already been accepted. To go beyond the limits set by these written standards and their amplifications is to incur the charge of having departed from the fold. A normative theology therein contained is regarded as the *sine qua non* of Lutheranism.

It has already been pointed out that this *inclusive* tendency is not free from selection. A cursory reading of the history of Lutheranism reveals striking differences and even schools within the movement, *e.g.,* pietism as over against a neo-scholasticism, not to mention such unique schools as have from time to time made their appearance in Germany under the influence of eminent Lutheran theologians. The selection has been, however, in the direction of the accepted standards of the church, regarded as somehow decisive and conclusive, set down at a time when, under the pressure of iconoclasms and misunderstandings, definitions were necessary for self-identity and preservation. It is these documents and their embellishments by so-called orthodox theologians (*i.e.,* their apologists) that we refer to as being regarded by many as *sine qua non criteria* for essential Lutheranism with the tendency and result that traditionalism has been set above any legitimate criticism. Orthodox Lutheranism may, in this light, well illustrate the usual fusion of traditionalism with indiscriminate acquiescence. It sets up an essence that is *traditionally inclusive.*

It must be said, however, that, theoretically at least, these standards are regarded as normative only so far as they are supposed to be in accordance with the Bible; and, that not the whole system of belief is contained therein but only those questions which were of controversial nature at the time of their being composed. *Practically,* however, they are regarded as normative because they are believed to be in harmony with an inspired Norm. So, "what the church has once confessed, with respect to questions of more than merely

temporary or local significance, becomes a part of her very life." [5]

> Our Confession [wrote the conservative American Lutheran theologian, Charles Porterfield Krauth] is a human explanation of God's Word, but so far as it correctly explains it, it sets forth God's Word. The man who regards it as a correct explanation, or as "a summary and just exhibition" of the doctrines of which it treats, is consistently a Lutheran. No other man is. If any man can define Lutheran consistency in any better way, we should be glad to have him do it. . . . We do not claim that our Confessors were infallible. We do not say they could not fail. We only claim that they did not fail.[6]

In other words, essential Lutheranism is here conceived to be tied up with certain historical expressions "taken-as-a-whole." It forms a typical instance of "the-whole-as-essence" point of view, or what we have called the *traditionally inclusive* tendency.

That certain difficulties arise with such a conception, taken literally, is seen in the tendency of some groups of Lutherans to soften the view by separating out the confessions in no disguised order of importance, beginning with the Ecumenical Creeds and the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and then adding the statement that the remaining confessions are in "harmony" with what has gone before. In other words, the remaining five confessions are recognized but given a place of honor secondary to the universally recognized creed among Lutherans, *viz.*, the *Augustana.*[7]

[5] See the Preface to *The Book of Concord; Or, The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church,* edited by H. E. Jacobs, Phila., 1911, p. 1.

[6] *The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology,* Phila., 1871, p. 186. Dr. Krauth distinguished *the* Confession (U.A.) from Confessions; nevertheless he maintained the normative equality of all six Lutheran symbols. See his chapter "The Confessional Principle of the Conservative Reformation," *op. cit.,* especially p. 164.

[7] *Cf., e.g.,* the Doctrinal Basis of the United Lutheran Church in America, set forth as Appendix C in my *The Crisis In American Lutheran Theology,* p. 372.

The argument for this conception is that the later official pronouncements are essentially explicit statements of what were implicit in those preceding, the additions being made under the pressure of later circumstances. This argument is parallel, if taken to mean as Krauth argued for the essential normative character of the symbols, to that propounded by Loisy and by orthodox Catholicism, *viz.,* that subsequent statements of the Church are necessary and integral elaborations of what was implicitly held before. To maintain the validity of later expressions officially recognized by a large group, it is suggested that the essence *includes the whole tradition;* so that to deny the one is to deny the necessary implications of the other. To be a good Catholic one must, for example, hold such a late doctrine as that of papal infallibility (formulated and adopted in 1870) to be necessarily implied in both Scripture and in the statements of orthodox tradition. To be a good Lutheran one must make, for example, a similar confession as that found in the Formula of Concord as consistently implied in the Scriptures and in the earlier confessions of the church. So runs this argument.

The difficulties of such an *inclusive* view on strictly logical grounds are self-evident. We are, at this point, not criticizing the doctrines set forth in the confessions *as such;* we mean only to question the assertion that to be a Lutheran one must subscribe to them as a whole. Space will allow mention of but a few of the implications of the view. In the first place, a good many who claim the right to the title of Lutheran and who have, even at the most, given their assent only to the *Confessio Augustana* and, perhaps to the Small Catechism of Luther, would be eliminated. Melanchthon and the Philippists who came to certain theological disagreements with others of the Lutheran fold in the period which immediately preceded the formulation of the Formula of Concord, would, by logical implication, not be Lutherans. A good many folk who have joined the Lutheran Church with no knowledge of the Symbolical Books

other than Luther's Catechism and the general principles taught in a catechumenical class could hardly be classed genuine Lutherans unless they were ready to make further subscriptions. On this same view, the General Synod (the first united Lutheran Church in America), which, as is well known, gave no official declaration in favor of the entire body of Lutheran symbols in its early history, could hardly be called Lutheran. It was this claim which came to be questioned that provoked the great Crisis in American Lutheran Theology in the middle of last century and which stirred the otherwise irenic champion of liberal Lutheranism in America, S. S. Schmucker, to wage a bitter war. "*Symbolism*" he declared, "*is . . . no part of original Lutheranism. . . .* The full symbolic system contended for . . . was not adopted until 1580, *after the Lutheran Church had existed more than half a century!!* That system, historically considered, is not, therefore, Lutheran, but *Post*-Lutheran and *Ultra*-Lutheran." [8] This was the cry raised by one who refused to bind himself to all the symbols of the Church and who still maintained the right to the title of Lutheran. It was a protest against the whole-as-essence theory. It would further be an interesting speculation, as some writers have suggested, whether or not Luther himself could be called a Lutheran on the basis of this conception.

But there are more serious questions raised on the basis of this claim which we are considering. May we hold, for example, that *all* which is contained in the Confessional Books are implicitly implied in the Scriptures and, shall we add, in Luther's own thinking? If we should have to withhold an affirmative answer to this question, then we have made a more vulnerable attack upon the claim. For it is clearly stated in the Introduction to the Formula of Concord that "the Holy Scripture alone is acknowledged as the

[8] *American Lutheranism Vindicated;* or, *Examination of the Lutheran Symbols on Certain Disputed Topics,* etc., Baltimore, 1856, pp. 163, 164. For an exposition of this period of controversy see *The Crisis In American Lutheran Theology, passim.*

[only] judge, norm, and rule, according to which, as by the [only] touchstone, all doctrines are to be examined and judged, as to whether they be godly or ungodly, true or false"; and that "the other symbols and other writings . . . do not possess the authority of a judge—for this dignity belongs to Holy Scripture alone; but merely give testimony to our religion, and set it forth to show in what manner from time to time the Holy Scriptures have been understood and explained in the Church of God by the doctors who then lived, as respects controverted articles, and by what arguments, dogmas at variance with the Holy Scriptures have been rejected and condemned." [9] It follows, therefore, that the official declaration of historic Lutheranism plainly declares that with new light and more adequate interpretation of the biblical writings, changes in doctrine are not only anticipated but necessary. If such is the case, Lutheranism should be the very first to make readjustments with the findings of the best biblical scholarship and interpretation. That such readjustments are necessary is the best testimony of the best recent scholarship. Much water has passed under the bridge since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The application of the historical approach to the understanding of all traditional documents, the technique of scientific method and research applied in the field of higher criticism, the better appreciation of the problems involved in linguistics and in the studies of social cultures—all have brought about revolutionary conceptions not only of the Bible as such but of inherited doctrines and theories. A literally infallible Bible, an assumption implied throughout the Lutheran symbols, verbally inspired, is a view that has passed by the board for good. The authority of the Sacred Writings is no longer found in "the letter" and sustained by some artificial theory of divine inspiration, but in the appeal of its spiritual content. Not all passages have equal value. Some are

[9] *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes,* Philip Schaff, D.D., LL.D., Vol. III, pp. 96-97. New York, 1877.

plainly interpolations and some represent the transitory colorings of a bygone social culture. Some present ancient apocalyptic notions which, even from an allegorical view, are difficult of application to an age which has changed its views of cosmogony. Ofttimes where literal interpretations of passages have been given by historic Protestantism, these have been found to be most untrue to the style and method of Oriental symbolism and allegory. Passages may no longer be wrested from their context and indiscriminately ascribed to "the word of the Lord." All this means that perhaps Lutheranism may have to turn its back on former expressions and doctrines; and in so doing deny the absolute normative character of its symbols. To do this is only to follow out its claim to be truthful to the biblical Norm as better understood; and at the same time it is to deny that to be a Lutheran one must accept *en toto* all that has gone into its official declarations.

We need not point out that the official declarations of Lutheranism contain many views no longer tenable. We would, for instance, hesitate to call the Pope the Anti-Christ.[10] We would hesitate to single out the Turks, the Anabaptists, the Jews and others in quite the same way as was done by the early Reformers. We might well question whether or not the Christological doctrines of the ubiquity of Christ's body (a quasi-materialistic and pan-Christic doctrine borrowed from Duns Scotus), and *communicatio idiomatum* are satisfactory even from the biblical point of view. Even the position which Luther himself took on the interpretation of the Eucharist may fairly be challenged as a necessarily true biblical exegesis. The literalism applied to certain biblical passages to bolster up certain points of view, a common procedure of the Protestant Church fathers in general, and evident in the Lutheran symbols, can hardly be squared at every point with modern biblical scholarship. As such, many of the theological dogmas contained therein

[10] See The Smalcald Articles, Jacobs' edition, *supra,* sec. 309, p. 320.

may have to undergo either restatement or serious modification. To have expected the Reformers to have given an absolutely correct biblical exegesis at every point would be to crown them with infallibility and accord them a position against which they most loudly protested in others.

The *traditionally inclusive* view, it must be admitted, is untenable. It would result in a fixed theology, an admission of an infallible exegesis, serious contradictions, pure dogmatism, and in an indefensible position to which no critical apologetic could be adequately provided in the light of the findings of the very best recent and reverent biblical scholarship.

We have mentioned already the second way in which the essence may be conceived, *viz.,* selecting some phase in the historic movement and making it represent the whole, what we have called the *arbitrarily exclusive* tendency. Such a procedure, whenever it has occurred, has been regarded by orthodox Lutheranism not only with grave suspicion but with a readiness to deny fellowship. Spener is an early classical example of this selective process. All Lutheran pietists have followed his lead in insisting upon the essential character of those doctrines only, which lead to personal piety. Confessionalism as such is relegated to a minimal position. It has been characteristic of Lutheran theology in Germany where modern theology has had its birth and where the frontier lines of scholarship have so long been maintained (ever since Schleiermacher challenged the critical rationalism and skepticism of his day by his appeal to the citadel of experience as a basis for any theological construction), to reinterpret Lutheranism in a more adequate way. From Ritschl down, the tendency has been to select some phase in Lutheranism as its essential content. Ritschl himself undertook the reconstruction of a Christian apologetic by an appeal to religious value as the criterion of the essence of Christianity. He regarded himself as in direct lineage with the true Luther spirit and with real

Lutheranism.[11] It is very easy to see how Ritschl might appeal to the great Reformer for corroboration of his doctrine of religious pragmatism, his soteriology and Christology. That he interpreted Christianity and Luther in too narrow and *exclusive* a way has been the contention of his severest critics. It is urged, and we think rightly so, that Christianity has definite metaphysical implications which Ritschl ignored. Luther himself in his experience of the grace of salvation expressly came to it through a definite outlook upon life, an outlook which was a definite Christian metaphysic. The Ritschlian interpretation of Luther is too subjective and one-sided.[12]

Dr. Waterhouse has aptly remarked, "There has never been a Ritschlian school, in the sense of a band of writers supporting his positions unreservedly, but there are many Ritschlians; that is to say, writers who owe a large debt to the general principles of Ritschl."[13] In Lutheran circles in Germany the influence of Albrecht Ritschl is plainly seen. In general there has been agreement in accepting the best in modern biblical scholarship with the emphasis upon Christian experience as the foundation of judging the worth of historic doctrines. Lutheranism has undergone divergent interpretations on this basis. The theologian Hermann, for example, has based his more liberal interpretations upon the Lutheran conception of faith and grace and is a widely acknowledged leader of a liberal Lutheranism. Seeberg, to name another example, represents a more conservative type of a modern Lutheran theology which, while accepting the data of the best research, maintains the main doctrines of Lutheran orthodoxy. The whole tendency, it is seen, is that of selection. The Ritschlian movement has been highly

[11] "He did yeoman service in breaking down the high Lutheran confessionalism which had been the order of the day." *An Outline of the History of Christian Thought Since Kant,* E. C. Moore, p. 92. New York, 1920.

[12] Ritschl regarded Luther's doctrine of justification as the kernel of the Lutheran Reformation. See *Luther and the Reformation,* James Mackinnon, Vol. II, p. 338. London and New York, 1928.

[13] *Modern Theories Of Religion,* E. S. Waterhouse, p. 107. London, 1910.

selective and has suffered accordingly from a one-sided emphasis. Pietism similarly has been too exclusive in its emphasis upon a life to be lived rather than a truth to be thought. Further examples might be multiplied indefinitely.

On the whole, the movement is "back to Luther" in the interpretation of Lutheranism. But the return to Luther is not so easy as it sounds since Luther himself gave us no systematic theology and his own utterances, as was his own personality, were full of contradictions.[14] We might well ask, *which* Luther? Some would have us say, the early Luther. Some, the later Luther. Some would have us emphasize, as do the Ritschlians, the Luther experience. Some would have us single out the Luther as systematized by Melanchthon in one or others of accepted standards. Some would find the essence of Lutheranism in Luther's mysticism; some in certain of his doctrinal utterances, *e.g.*, his reiteration of the Pauline injunction "the just shall live by faith." Some would find in Lutheranism its distinctive note in the doctrines of a saving Word and sacraments. And so on. The whole procedure is that of selection and it would be easy to criticize a too narrow and *exclusive* a conception. Lutheranism no less than Luther himself is a complex problem. Like all complex problems it is easy to get lost in analyses and lose the sense of synthesis and perspective. This is the serious danger in understanding any great movement or any great man. We must be on our guard that, when we answer the question "What is Lutheranism?" we will not have to plead guilty of having lost the sense of perspective in our analysis of details or by our subjective selections. We need an inclusive view but with a sense of selective evaluation; we need also to recognize the important elements which go into the picture without the loss of the

[14] Concerning the contradictory character of Luther's personality, the author may be permitted to refer to his unpublished essay under the title of *Cross-Currents In The Personality of Martin Luther—A Study In The Psychology of Religious Genius* (on deposit in the library of Yale University, 1923).

picture itself. There is a subtle fallacy in over-simplification, in an "either-or" as well as in a "both-and" procedure.

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We are now ready to make application of the *critically evaluative* approach to our general problem. We would say that the essence of Lutheranism is that, in historic Lutheranism, which must be retained in order to realize its valid ideals. This must be both vital and reasonable,[15] individually and socially considered, and critically defensible. Whatever in historic Lutheranism is opposed to this is un- or anti-Lutheran and whatever does not vitally contribute to it is adiaphorous.[16] We may do well, at this point, to set down certain broad principles which seem from the *critically evaluative* point of view implicit in historic Lutheranism and which we believe will stand up under the approach adopted.

1. In the first place, whatever else characterizes it, Lutheranism, *negatively,* was a reaction against certain definite points of view and certain interpretations given historic Christianity by a medieval ecclesiasticism; and, *positively,* it was an attempt to revive an evangelical interpretation and expression of Christianity. It aimed to introduce no novelty; rather, it was to be a return and a revival. Its name was a label applied as a stigma of something new; Luther himself was loathe to accept it. The very first of its official documents was written "to furnish the proof that they [the Reformers] really held the *genuine* old Catholic faith."[17] How far Lutheranism has succeeded in maintaining a strictly evangelical position would be a fruitful inquiry. It is to be doubted that Luther himself measured

[15] By "reasonable" we do not mean "rational" in the sense which any "rationalism" would employ such a category. There may well be *non-rational* elements in religion which at the same time need not be *irrational* or *un-reasonable.* Accordingly, we may include mystical and non-logical phases of experience as compatible with a viewpoint that is "reasonable."

[16] See *supra,* p. 273.

[17] *Text-Book of the History of Doctrines,* Reinhold Seeberg, Vol. II, p. 332. Translated by Charles E. Hay, Phila., 1905. Italics mine.

up to this standard at all times.[18] That he carried over with him much in medieval Catholic theology uncritically is not to be wondered at from a psychological point of view. That some of his views were colored by his early and long rigorous academic discipline has long been recognized by students.

2. In the second place, Lutheranism has insisted that Christianity is essentially a religion of salvation; a salvation, moreover, of objective reference in which the individual as such plays a minor part. It has set its face with rigidity and suspicion against any *endeavor* kind of religious expression where man himself assumes a major rôle. The ethical content of Christianity receives a place only in relation to the redemptive experience. Luther's own personal life is the setting for such an emphasis; for, had he not tried by serious moral endeavor to gain an inner harmony and peace with himself and the world of circumstance? That Lutheranism should find in the Pauline interpretation of Christianity its best expression is, viewed in this light, only natural. Christ himself assumes the character of a Savior rather than a mere Preceptor. The sacraments receive their interpretation in a similar way. The whole function of the Christian religion takes on a cosmic setting in which by a "divine initiative" man is to find himself and make his best adjustment. Christianity is revelatory of the character of God and His method of bringing about in relation to man a satisfactory at-one-ment. All this, however, is to be found not in accordance with a system of ecclesiastical requirements but by the individual in complete surrender to the whole program of Christ. The Church, the priesthood, the sacraments—all are means to effect this adjustment and are of value only as they aid in its achievement. As to how salvation in theory is brought about Luther himself did not work out to a full satisfaction.[19]

[18] *Cf., The Theology of Luther in Its Historical Development and Inner Harmony,* Julius Köstlin, Vol. II, p. 204. Translated by Charles E. Hay, Phila., 1897.

[19] *Cf., The Idea Of Atonement in Christian Theology,* Hastings Rashdall, p. 398 ff., London, 1920; *The Theology of Luther,* Köstlin (tr. by Charles E. Hay), Vol. II, p. 203 ff., and p. 413 ff.

The older theories of the atonement with some modifications were employed to explain the process; and it is a question whether Lutherans themselves are fully satisfied with these expressions. At-one-ment belongs primarily to experience rather than to theory.[20]

It might be well to add a statement at this point in regard to this second principle. We have said that Lutheranism is essentially a "religion of salvation." The term "salvation," it is well understood, implies a peculiar status and condition in which a need is imperatively felt and a solution or adjustment effected. It may be used narrowly or broadly, depending upon the character of the felt need and the kind of adjustment that satisfactorily meets this need. In traditional theology, Catholic and orthodox Protestant, salvation has been conceived largely in terms of another world, a salvation from a wholly bad circumstance of the present life to a future condition of bliss. The need suggested is to be released from the world, the flesh, and the devil, somewhat after the Platonic sense. In modern theology, the term is defined much more broadly but yet in terms of a fundamental need. The present world is not regarded as essentially bad but a place to be cultivated and beautified as best it may, with lives to be lived in the fullest measure. Salvation is to be effected *in* the world, not out of it. This means reconditioned and readjusted personalities, a salvation from the lower to the higher, one that brings about an approximation in an ever-increasing manner of the best potential into the best actual through the refining process gained in fellowship and complete surrender to the Christ-Spirit. All this, according to modern Christian theology, is in harmony with the will of Christ, a redemption in which he plays the major rôle. A postponement of salvation solely to another life is an insufficient salvation, as the modern sees it.

Traditional Lutheranism, however, has tended to em-

[20] It must be admitted, however, that orthodox Lutheranism was set upon giving a definite theory, on the whole following the Augustinian and Anselmic tradition.

phasize salvation largely in terms of another world, a saving from this world of tears to that ideal other. Salvation has been conceived in a rather mechanical manner, with the tendency to minimize the ethical phase of it. This, however, is not the fault of an inherent Lutheran principle of salvation but rather a misinterpretation of that principle. When a Lutheran speaks of salvation he should mean to include the needs of the present. When a Lutheran speaks of the forgiveness of sins and the appropriation of divine grace, he should mean to include these in terms of the present. It surely ought not to mean *merely* a transaction in which a ledger sheet containing the records of misdeeds are made to balance and in which even *poena* are freely remitted; it must surely have wider connotations in terms of a life that is to be lived and for which Christ surely offered himself as the Way.

Luther's "religion of salvation" is hardly otherworldly in character. It is true that the lines reached Godward but they also reached manward and to the world of circumstance. There are wide social implications in his "religion of salvation." [21] The tendency to stress otherworldliness in traditional Lutheran theology is due to an overemphasis of certain dichotomous terms used by Luther. The Great Reformer went through a terrific struggle quite parallel with that of Paul [22] and somewhat similar to that of Augustine. These experiences were dichotomous in character. After harmony or "salvation" had been effected, Luther like Paul tended to use antithetical terms setting forth these dichotomous rifts in experience: sin *vs* grace, law *vs* gospel, Divine wrath *vs* Divine mercy, death *vs* life, bondage *vs* liberty, the old Adam *vs* the new Adam, flesh *vs* spirit, Adam *vs* Christ, the Devil *vs* God, etc. He was ready to read dichotomies everywhere. It was only natural that the dichotomy, *this world* would be set over against *that other world,* implying

[21] *Cf., e.g.,* his two Catechisms.
[22] *Cf.,* Paul's confession in Romans 7, *passim.*

the antithesis of the one being bad and the other good, the one where Satan rules and the other where God reigns. The projection of a "divided self" out into a "divided Universe" (Duo-verse) was perhaps inevitable but full of the most serious consequences. Traditional Lutheranism has made full use of these dichotomies, some regarding these as the very heart of Lutheranism. It would be an interesting question to ask in what respect and how far Jesus' outlook upon life was dichotomous in character, especially as applied cosmically. It must not be forgotten that these dichotomous terms of Luther are but expressions of a tensely religious experience and should not be artificially and indiscriminately applied without reference to their proper setting. It is not the law *vs* the gospel, nor sin *vs* grace, etc., *as such* that characterize fundamental Lutheran principles, but the "religion of salvation" around which these terms revolve and to which fundamental these terms serve as highly suggestive expressions. Nor is it necessary to stress unduly *this* world over against the *other,* as traditional Lutheranism seems to have tended to do, and read into the idea of salvation a cosmic dichotomy which carries precarious ethical and social implications.

Salvation according to essential Lutheranism is a vital and personal adjustment, individual, social, divine, broad in character and not in the narrower sense merely a mechanical or artificial arrangement. The forgiveness of sins, a doctrine that looms large in Lutheran theology, should not be set off and isolated as a distinct principle of Lutheranism but as inextricably bound up with that experience of at-one-ment or salvation that comes in fellowship and complete surrender to the Christ-Spirit, in which experience the individual readily acknowledges that he has played the minor rôle.

3. In the third place, Lutheranism has grounded itself to the past in its insistence that somehow there is laid up in a written record of funded testimony, a guiding star by which a sense of direction is to be maintained and around which

Christian thinking and practices, both individual and social, should be focalized. The canonical Scriptures assume a place of major importance for Lutheranism as the vehicle for normative faith and practice and as a proving ground for tentative and divergent judgments. In this way Lutheranism has fought off any tendency to construct a view of Christianity after the patterns of mere speculation and caprice. In this way, too, a sense of perspective and continuity has been kept with an *historic* faith. Just what this guiding star is conceived to be and how it is to be isolated and distinguished, has not always been clear. Luther himself earlier had found hidden away in the Sacred Writings a Norm by which everything else was to be judged, *viz.*, Christ. Upon this basis he was willing to say uncomplimentary things about other portions of Scriptures;[23] and, moreover, he was willing to allegorize beyond the limits of textual accuracy. He found certain passages *en rapport* with his own spirit and he was loud in his proclamation that here was the Word of God amidst chaff. It is well known, too, that later, under the pressure of iconoclasm and scattering subjective interpretations given the older faith by those who reveled in the "new freedom," he recoiled from his own selective judgments of Scripture and found in the whole content the very Word of God. He was willing to regard the Scriptures as "the Spirit's own writing," a view which invites at once the charge of inconsistency with other of his utterances. Orthodox Lutheranism has regarded the literal inerrancy of Scripture as a position which is characteristic of the mature Luther and has practically ignored the utterances and the implications of Luther, the severe Bible critic. Lutheranism, moreover, has not constructed any theory of inspiration of its own; Scriptural declarations as authoritative was not a point of dispute among the Protestant groups. The method of inspiration has received various

[23] Köstlin, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 228 ff. A picture of Luther as the severe critic of the Bible is to be had in Köstlin's account.

interpretations by Protestant theologians; the fact of it was not doubted. That the Bible is somehow unique and authoritative has been one of Lutheranism's major principles; just how and how far, there is no united answer.

4. In the fourth place, Lutheranism has insisted that Christianity in its program and appeal is *andro*-centric rather than *anthropo*-centric. It searches out the man before it deals with mankind. It is highly personal and individualistic in its emphasis. The Lutheran Reformation found its expression in the soul of an individual and its appeal went out from that individual to other individuals. The whole movement presents a challenge to mass-action and mass-control. The autonomy of personality, of freedom of conscience, of the right to private judgment, the individual his own priest, were clarion calls of that Reformation. The sacred institutions of the Church, ceremonies, customs, even the Church itself are instruments and not ends. Man was not made for them; but they for man.[24] The whole program of preaching, of exhortation, of debate, of educational reform, inaugurated and exhibited by Luther is to be understood by this emphasis. And it was easy for him to find in the teachings and methods of Jesus and of his early interpreters this method vigorously applied. Whether or not he and the other Reformers remained true to this principle need not here concern us; that it is implicit in the Lutheran Reformation and in the Lutheran interpretation of Christianity is clearly evident. The best illustration of the working-out of this principle is seen in the tremendous work upon which the Reformer entered in the publication of tracts, appeals and expositions which were directed to the common folk about him. His *Treatise on Christian Liberty,* his two Catechisms, his translation of the entire Bible into the German vernacular were straight appeals to the people. It was his sincere conviction, developed in the stress of bitter controversy, that

[24] That there is an affinity here with *humanism* is most evident. Lutheranism, however, goes beyond the limits prescribed by the strictly humanistic position.

ecclesiasticism represented a break from primitive Christianity in its appeal to group action for the most part imperfectly understood. In this he but gave expression to his own experience. Social reform is only ultimately possible on the basis of individual transformation. This has been a characteristic Lutheran principle.

A corollary here follows which had revolutionary consequences in subsequent social theory and practice. The emphasis upon man as such brought about new conceptions of his vocation: such as had been considered high and privileged were leveled down to the place where menial and humble occupations were elevated; high and low, priest and lay, learned and unlearned, were brought together on a plane of religious equality with far-reaching social implications. It would be an interesting question to trace out the source of this principle; it is evident that nominalistic scholasticism had its subtle influence upon Luther's developing conceptions in more ways than one. The democratic ideal was something strangely new to the general thought of his day and it must be said that Luther's *andro*-centric principle came at a time when conditions were ripening to welcome it. It is not strange, in the light of the modern perspective, that many interpreters regard this as the Lutheran Reformation's most significant contribution.

5. In the fifth place, Lutheranism has conceived of Christianity as free from any tangling political alliances and has, therefore, in theory, maintained the autonomy of both Christianity and the State. That this has not always worked out in the history of the Lutheran Church in Europe is not to deny that the principle is implicitly bound up with the movement. In this principle we have a complete break with Catholic theory and a reversion to the policies of Jesus as he is seen in the framework of a political aspiring Judaism and of the mighty Roman empire. In this principle we see too an antithesis of the policy of Calvin's theocracy and of later attempts to join altar and throne. It follows that coercion

in any form is forbidden on this principle; and here again we see but the implications of the *andro*-centric emphasis given by the great Reformer. The tremendous significance of this point of view for modern political theory has long been recognized.

6. Sixth, and lastly, the ethical implications of Lutheranism are significant. The religious experience of salvation issues in a morality that is free and wholesome. Prohibitions, negations, rules and regulations, give way before the Christian's liberty. The exacting codes of medieval Catholicism, Luther found to be parallel with Judaistic legalism; and, like Christ, he was willing to break through these even at the expense of the severest criticism. His marriage, his home life, his "table talk," his humanity were at once the target of a shocked traditionalism and later the ideal to which succeeding generations have pointed whenever their own emancipation was called into question. On this principle, Lutheranism parts company with any "systems" of ethical codes, with much in the Calvinistic tradition, and with Puritanism in particular.

Within these six broad principles may well be included many of the doctrines and practices which have received emphasis in Lutheran theology and polity, *e.g.,* the fundamental antithesis between the law and the gospel; justification by faith; the grace and assurance of pardon; the atoning work of Christ; the sacraments as means of grace; the theory of the church as a community of believers; etc. Such doctrines, however, are implications of general principles rather than initial premises.

It may be objected that Lutheranism cannot be reduced so simply as here outlined. Such an objection may be sustained providing that detailed Lutheran views do not cloud the general Lutheran perspective, and do not violate its general principles. It may be objected, moreover, that the principles here outlined tend to distill the movement, robbing it of its unique character. The reply is that Lutheranism has

by its very life and expressions declared itself to be part and parcel of a genuinely Christian point of view and not something unique *as such;* hence, to picture it with nicely drawn lines, set apart and chiseled out from the great Christian traditions, is to make of it just what it claimed not to be. It is essentially an interpretation of Christianity provoked by peculiar circumstances in the historic life of the Church and its uniqueness is to be found only in the way that interpretation is broadly set forth.

That there are in historic Lutheranism elements which are colored by circumstances both of time and thought and hence provincial, as well as elements that are indefensible viewed in the light of later and more adequate interpretations of Christianity and of the Scriptures can hardly be denied. If it is correct to say that Lutheranism insists, as we have earlier said, upon an evangelical interpretation of Christianity and upon a reëvaluation from time to time of its position in the light of the best understanding of the Bible as the source book both for faith and practice, it should be ready to make revisions if necessary or else remain untrue to its very spirit and principle. That the time is ripe for such reconsiderations is the claim of modern theology. The doctrine of the complete inerrancy of the Bible upon which historic Lutheranism has built up a system of orthodoxy can hardly, without a loss of intellectual integrity and vitality, be to-day maintained in the light of the historical method of understanding the Scriptures. If this is so, Lutheranism must consider such a doctrine as *non-essential* to its character. It must be ready even to part company with Luther himself and with the great Reformers and remain true to that principle which insists upon conformity with the truth. To treat the biblical books as somehow immune from this approach is to be untrue to them. On the other hand, to follow the lead of modern biblical scholarship is also to part company with certain dogmatic views which have long been considered by some as basic. This does not mean to say that there is no Norm

upon which to measure judgments; rather it means that the Norm is to be found no longer in the letter but, shall we say, in the spiritual content. Just what it is is the task for modern Lutheran theology to say.[25] An adequate theory of inspiration might also well be worked out. It need not be said, on the other hand, that to deny the unique value of the Bible as containing normative truth and principles for Christian thought and practice, is to cut away from a fundamental Lutheran principle.

Certain other dogmas which have passed as Lutheran may have to undergo serious modification. Luther's insistence, for example, upon man's *total* depravity is hardly tenable either on Christian, moral, or reasonably considered grounds. The accentuation given this doctrine both by St. Augustine and Luther is evidently psychologically and socially motivated. It led to exaggerated views as well as serious inconsistencies; both defended a predestinarian view and accordingly found themselves entangled in an inconsistent theology.[26] A fair interpretation of the teachings of Jesus will hardly sustain such a view in spite of the strong utterances of the Apostle Paul. The considerations of moral endeavor weigh heavily against such an exaggeration. And, further, to propound the

[25] The term "Word of God" should be used with discrimination. It is no longer tenable to use it as a synonym for the entire Bible, in spite of the Reformers. The term is a reverent one and should be applied only when it can be done with the utmost reverence. To us, the "Word of God" is the validly spiritual content which rises unmistakably in Scriptural utterances and in the pronouncements of Christ-like seers.

[26] In the development of Lutheran theology in the Formula of Concord, this becomes strikingly evident. A comparison, for example, of Articles II and XI reveals two incompatible views; in the one, the utter helplessness of the human will is strongly set forth, while in the other it is declared that Christ "earnestly wishes that all men may come to him, and suffer themselves to be cared for and succored," and that responsibility lies with men, so that "neither God nor his election, but their own wickedness, is to blame if they perish." *The Creeds of Christendom,* etc., Schaff, Vol. III.

The discriminating reader will understand that we here distinguish the doctrine of the natural disposition of man to fall short of an ideal Divine Will from that of the extreme doctrine of *total* depravity. To question the latter is not to doubt the former. The failure in traditional Lutheran theology to make this distinction (*i.e.,* between a defensible truth and its indefensible exaggeration) has resulted in a hopeless inconsistency and in an ethical *impasse.*

utter worthlessness of man implies the curious paradox in which salvation is conceived to be effected upon a worthless object. In spite of such a doctrine, Luther tried to maintain harmony between theology and morality, although at some places he cut the thread through.[27] We must, therefore, on Christian, moral and reasonable grounds regard such an extreme doctrine as *non-essential* in character.

Space forbids the discussion of other doctrines in this connection. The context of this paper, however, should suggest other views that need restatement. Our criterion of essence has indicated that any doctrine, however hallowed by tradition, which does not vitally contribute to the valid ideals implicit in the historic movement, must be regarded as unessential and adiaphorous, if not frankly un-Lutheran. This would include matters of polity, methods of worship such as liturgical forms, as well as attitudes upon current social practices.[28] The doctrine of literal inerrancy of the Bible is not valid because it is not true; the doctrine of the *total* depravity of human nature is not valid because it is not sound from either a Christian or an ethical point of view. The ideally valid, in religion, must be both true and ethical. Essential Lutheranism, we hold, is to be sought in the valid ideal if it is, as it purports to be, in harmony with the principles of genuine Christianity.

Lutheranism, we would then maintain, finds its essence within the circle of the six broad principles above enumerated.[29] We believe that it can be adequately maintained that here is a *minimal* position that can be defended according to

[27] *Cf. The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology*, Rashdall, p. 400ff.

[28] It is interesting, in this connection, to note how, from time to time, the Lutheran Church in America has been swept away on the wave of Puritanism and legalism in its attitude toward certain social questions and pleasures. It is within remembrance of most of us how long indeed was the list of taboos placed upon many innocent pleasures by the Church and proclaimed as "unlawful" and "un-Lutheran." Compare this with the sixth principle, *ante*, p. 292.

[29] It is, of course, admitted that other related and relevant principles might be consistently set forth and stated in other ways. There is nothing magical or final about the prosaic number *six*.

the requirements of the *critically evaluative* conception of essence. Admittedly, this conception is not simple but complex; it is complex because its problem is not simple. We would be bold to declare that, without these principles, genuine Lutheranism as such ceases to be. It would be easy to construct a modern and a defensible apologetic upon this basis. These principles are vital and valid, however considered. They represent worthy ideals; they are grounded upon an historical perspective. While they represent interpretation they do not present mere speculation. They are not eisegetical historical readings but exegetical. However clouded at times both in Luther and in historic Lutheranism, they have served to give whatever power and vitality that has gathered around this movement. Frankly, they represent the wheat amidst much that has been chaff.

* * * * * *

It is reported that Henry Ward Beecher was once asked if he was a Calvinist. He answered, "Yes, because I believe what John Calvin would have believed, had he lived in my time, and seen things as I see them." How can we deny the significant truth underlying this statement as we apply it to the case of the prophetic Luther? Surely the changed complexion of twentieth-century thought would afford ample opportunity for him to call forth a searching *critical evaluation* of the thought of four centuries ago. And we admire him surely not as a saint with impeccable and irreproachable views in matters religious, theological and social, but because we believe that were his leadership incarnate to-day he would do for this generation, other things being equal, what he did for his own. That consecrated and intelligent leadership is sorely needed in this age of tremendous transitions is the assumption underlying the motivation of this book and stated in its preface. Luther, we believe, would be one of the very first to reinterpret and reëvaluate that large group of Protestants that to-day carries his name. We should hardly

believe that he would answer modern problems by merely citing pages from his own writings or the writings of his followers. We think highly enough of him to be convinced that he would be rewriting much which had been set down and adding much more. In no sense do we believe that he would be an iconoclast; rather we can only see him as a defender of the good in the old and a purveyor of the good in the new.

Even as he found in the cry of the people about him the cue and the inspiration to certain ideals for which he fought as for a righteous cause, so we believe he would find as sincere expressed longings in the minds and hearts of men of the twentieth century the cue and inspiration for new prophetic deliverances. He would find many Protestant children anxious to be faithful to the best in tradition but not knowing how. He would find many young folks schooled in two chambers of thought: the one shackled to notions and categories no longer vital or even intelligible to their experience, the other tossed out upon a sea of free inquiry with seemingly no place for landing; the one regarded as the field of religion and Christianity, the other the cold world of scientific investigation. He would find many consecrated leaders in other Protestant groups heroically patching together the broken threads and suffering misunderstanding and criticism thereby. Curiously enough, he would find within the denomination carrying his name some who, by an attempted synthesis, have made matters worse by being afraid to face the issues involved in readjusted thinking and closing their eyes to a franker diagnosis. The flood of books on religion, the profusion of cults here in America, the widely heralded controversies within sacred walls, would surely prove the healthy sign of human interest in matters pertaining to faith, but it would also reveal the present era of confusion confounded. The movement toward unified action, evident throughout the civilized world in matters political, economic, social, religious, and otherwise, he would surely

regard as significant signs of the times, momentous in their consequences.

The most dangerous foes of the Church, to-day as always, are to be found within rather than without its walls. Luther would not be slow in discerning that the current tendency on the part of some Lutherans, especially in America, in identifying themselves with the fundamentalistic movement is only to invite tragedy. To force the organism to assimilate certain indigestible foods as are served up under the name of fundamentalism is to take the very life out of essential Lutheranism and to destroy it. What will be left, granting the success of the endeavor, would be something *other than* Lutheranism. To alienate an ever-increasing number of folk trained in the methods and data of modern science, as well as the growing number of catholic-minded folk who by wide social contacts are being brought into fields of larger vision, from a vital relationship with the Church, because of a mistaken sense of evaluation is to be untrue to the genuinely Lutheran spirit. It is to forget that Lutheranism was vigorously prosecuted from the vantage point of an historic college campus, with an appeal that was directed to the lettered as well as the unlettered folk of the day.

Lutheranism, moreover, is not bound by any of its principles to any particular view of cosmogony as some Fundamentalistic anti-evolutionists suppose. Nor is Lutheranism committed to the historic symbols in a way which would put a hallowed loyalty above truth. This does not mean, however, that Lutheranism is non-confessional. It is as confessional as are its *valid* convictions and principles.

In the light of all this, what, it may be asked, is the contribution of Lutheranism to the twentieth century and its place in the movement toward Christian unity? Our answer is suggested by the approach we have sought to defend throughout. By its very characteristic nature as a movement of revival of an evangelical interpretation of Christianity [80] Lutheranism, we hold, carries within itself no aspirations of

[80] See *ante*, p. 284.

self-perpetuation.[21] That such has been the emphasis historically is, of course, self-evident. It is not itself as a denomination which it seeks to perpetuate; rather, it is those principles which are implicitly bound up within its very character and which are its vital convictions that are to be defended and maintained. Its contribution to the cause of Christianity lies in an insistence upon these principles in whatever way they may be best expressed. An organization as such does not make Lutheranism; it is at best a vehicle through which Lutheranism may seek to express itself. Accordingly, it is conceivable that Lutheranism may be found in most unsuspected places; even under disguised or undisguised names. Furthermore, it would follow that, unless it meant a denial of its principles, Lutheranism ought to promote the most sincere efforts to join in any endeavor to bring together the scattered groups of Christians, even though it would cost the surrender of a name or of ties with traditional organizations. In short, granted that Protestants should in large numbers find themselves in accord with the essential character of the genuinely Lutheran principles, even though there should be some disagreement on lesser points, it is our contention that those of the historic Lutheran household should be willing to join in the closest fellowship and be willing to assume, if expedient, a new name and adopt a platform in terms with present needs and demands.[22] The

[21] If this be true, as we believe it to be, we would have a serious reversal of motives and methods of missionary propagation. The Lutheran Church, in common with other Protestant communions, has long been engaged in a program of *self*-perpetuation. A look back upon home and foreign missionary efforts of only a generation ago affords a picture of some most astoundingly unethical practices carried on by competing Christian groups, prompted, for a large part, by motives of *self-aggrandizement.*

[22] This should not be taken to mean a complete divorcement with the past. The principles would forbid such a procedure. It does mean, however, that when new exigencies arise, it is to be expected that new expressions will be set forth. The signs of the times point toward a day fast dawning, which will see the formulation of new credal expressions, based upon broad Christian principles and in harmony with the best insights and perspectives. That the day will come when there will be agreement in all particulars is an expectancy founded upon a misreading of human psychology; even if it were possible, it is a question if it would be desirable. This, however, should not preclude genuine fraternity and union on the basis of essentials, critically valid.

mission of essential Lutheranism is, accordingly, fulfilled only as its principles are realized. If these are found to be endangered, Lutheranism, we hold, has a *raison d'être* to propagate itself, if necessary, as a distinct communion in the twentieth as well as in any century. If, on the other hand, it recognizes in other traditional groups a genuine sympathy with these principles, it has, we also hold, no right either on validly moral grounds or on the basis of its own essential character to stand aloof or foster the spirit of sectarianism.

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